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CYCLE GUIDE

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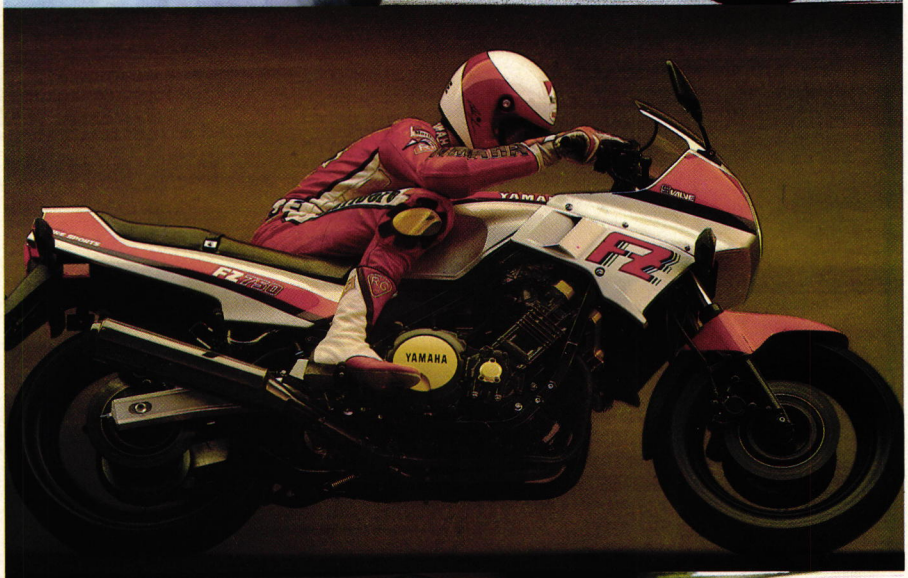

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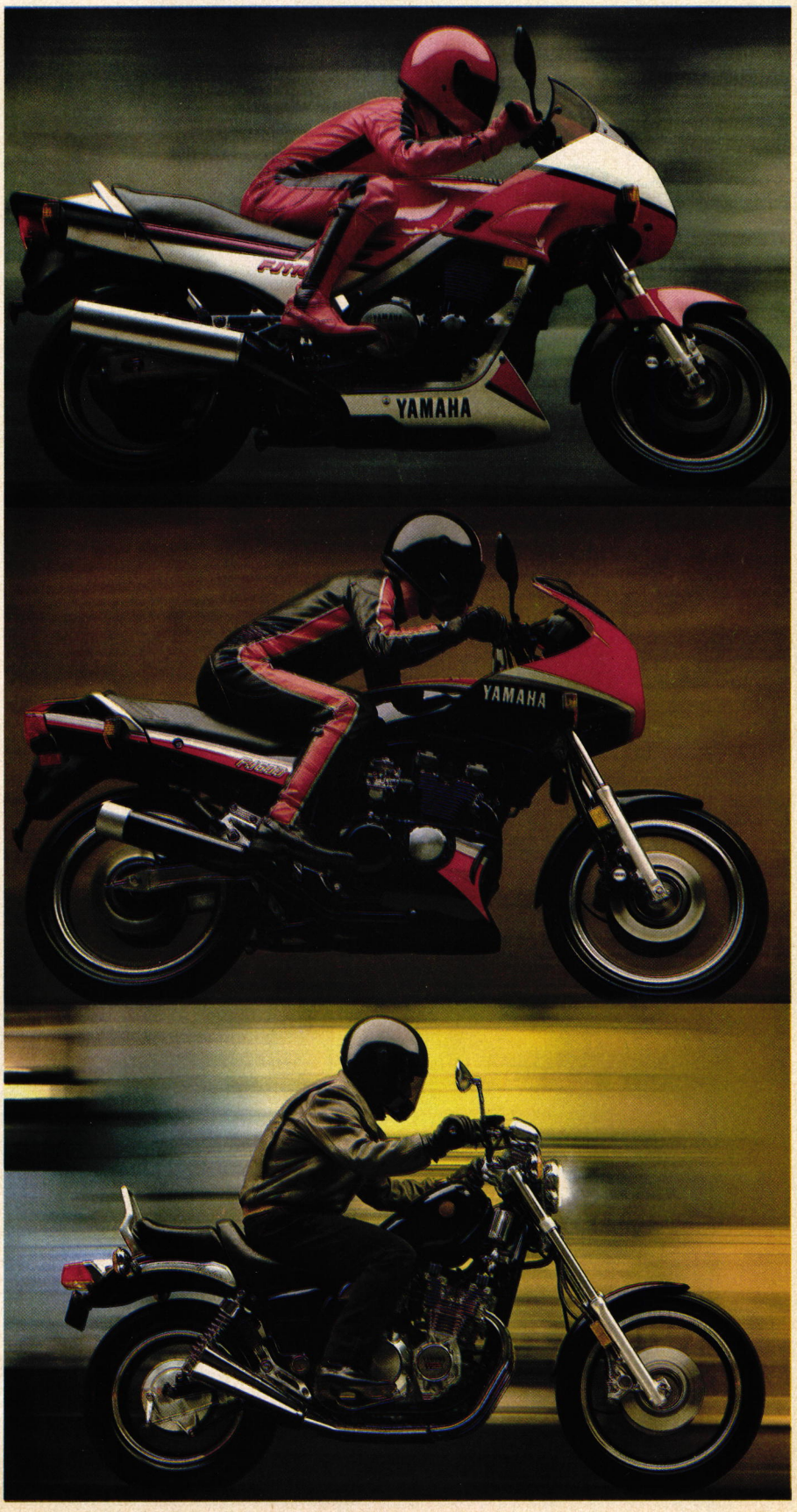

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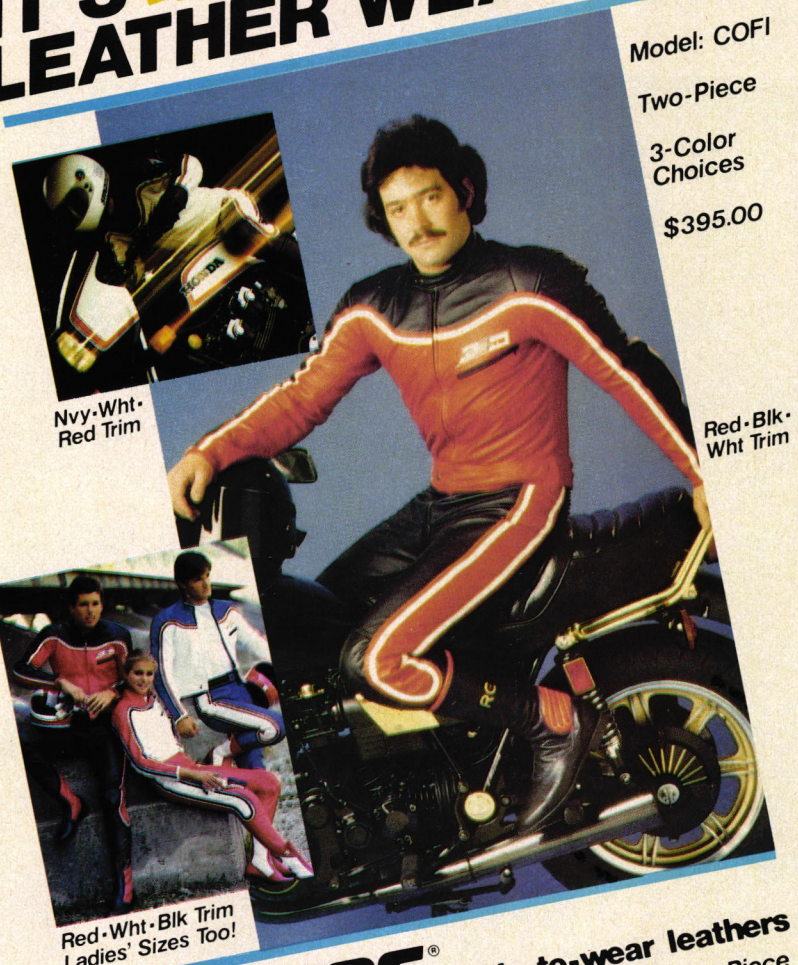

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QUOTE: "Both ends of the RS were sliding, and I leaned hard on the steel shoe, feathering the throttle for control. I figured I'd just bought myself a $100,000 motorcycle."
—Pg. 62

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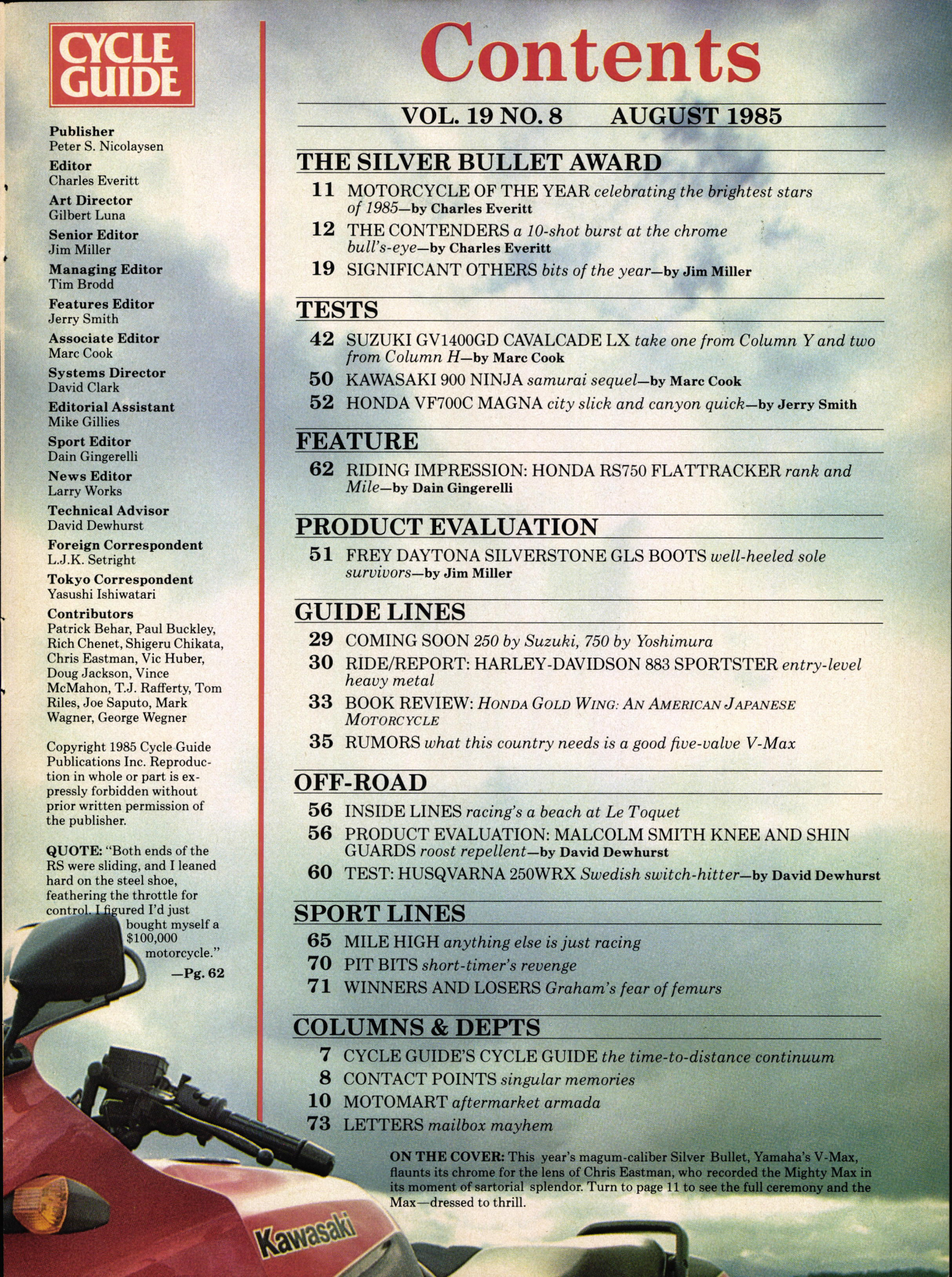

ON THE COVER: This year's magum-caliber Silver Bullet, Yamaha's V-Max, flaunts its chrome for the lens of Chris Eastman, who recorded the Mighty Max in its moment of sartorial splendor. Turn to page 11 to see the full ceremony and the Max—dressed to thrill.

CAMEL LIGHTS

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OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Cagiva WRX 250-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.1/11.6	232	30.0/4.65	6
Cagiva WMX 250-'84	January '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.7	221	28.0/4.65	6
Can-Am 320 Trials-'84	October '84	Trials	Two-stroke	4.8/4.5	205	25.5/3.00	6
Honda ATC250R-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.8/8.0	311	N/A	5
Honda CR125R-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.3	195	27.2/4.29	6
Honda CR250R-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	216	26.7/4.13	5
Honda CR500R-'85	February '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	232	27.5/4.41	5
Honda XR200R-'84	August '84	Enduro	Four-stroke	9.9/9.6	235	26.0/4.13	6
Honda XR350R-'83	June '83	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.9/10.4	253	26.0/3.94	6
Honda XR500R-'83	October '83	Desert	Four-stroke	11.0/12.2	278	25.5/3.94	5
Husqvarna 250WRX-'85	August '85	Enduro/Desert	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	239	27.0/4.72	6
Husqvarna 400WR-'84	July '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.0/11.2	242	28.5/5.16	6
Husqvarna 500CR-'85	April '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.9	235	27.0/4.72	4
Husqvarna 510TE-'85	March '85	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.6/11.9	263	28.5/5.16	6
Kawasaki KDX200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.9	214	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KX125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	195	27.5/4.57	6
Kawasaki KX250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	220	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.6/8.2	319	N/A	5
Kawasaki KLR600-'84	September '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.2/8.3	322	29.5/4.80	5
Maico 490 Spider-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.2	240	27.0/4.72	4
M-Star 250 Supercross-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.7	230	27.0/4.72	5
Suzuki ALT50-'83	June '83	ATV	Two-stroke	N/A	90	N/A	1
Suzuki Quadracer 250-'85	May '85	ATV	Two-stroke	7.2/8.1	326	N/A	5
Suzuki Quadrunner 250-'84	October '84	ATV	Four-stroke	1.0/N/A	384	N/A	5
Suzuki RM125-'85	May '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.4/11.8	202	29.0/4.84	6
Suzuki RM250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.9	220	27.8/4.41	5
Yamaha BW200-'85	April '85	Trail	Four-stroke	6.3/6.6	249	27.3/3.46	5
Yamaha IT200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.6	211	28.0/4.53	6
Yamaha TY350-'85	July '85	Trials	Two-stroke	6.5/4.8	193	23.0/1.93	6
Yamaha XT250-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.7/7.9	266	28.3/4.60	6
Yamaha YZ125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.3	194	27.7/4.57	6
Yamaha YZ250-'85	June '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.5/12.3	219	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'84	June '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.7	227	28.5/4.72	4

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW K100RS-'84	October '84	4I/G	987.2	12.381/109.48	133	532	39–54	139
BMW R100RS-'84	October '84	2C/G	979.9	13.425/95.84	111	506	45–57	163
H-D FLTC Tour Glide-'84	March '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	14.603/88.75	107	774	39–54	152
H-D FXRS Low Glide-'84	January '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	13.917/94.57	112	575	38–48	140
H-D FXRT Sport Glide-'85	October '84	45 deg. 2D/H	1337.7	14.180/90.36	92	640	28–51	126
H-D XLH Sportster-'85	February '85	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.742/95.94	111	490	43–58	146
Honda Gold Wing Ltd Ed.-'85	March '85	4C/G	1181.9	13.346/98.36	113	810	37–45	134
Honda Nighthawk S-'84	February '84	4A/G	696.7	12.048/109.75	125	492	28–45	125
Honda NS250R-'85	May '85	90 deg. 2D/F††	249.3	13.091/101.58	121	339	27–38	135
Honda VF500F Interceptor-'84	July '84	90 deg. 4D/F	497.6	12.484/106.00	126	419	33–48	123
Honda VF700C Magna-'85	August '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.390/108.82	128	520	34–47	131
Honda VF700F Interceptor-'84	October '84	90 deg. 4D/F	698.9	12.323/106.50	124	512	37–48	136
Honda VF700S Sabre-'85	January '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.358/109.09	121	514	28–48	136
Honda VF1000R-'85	July '85	90 deg. 4D/F	998.4	11.308/121.78	149	578	20–42	135
Honda VT1100C Shadow-'85	June '85	45 deg. 2D/G	1099.2	13.022/100.33	112	560	33–44	127
Honda V65 Magna-'85	February '85	90 deg. 4D/G	1098.0	11.440/118.42	142	566	34–46	133
Kawasaki Ninja 600R-'85	March '85	4A/F	592.6	12.124/109.09	135	448	40–48	135
Kawasaki GPz550-'85	March '85	4A/F	553.8	12.478/104.89	121	432	44–54	137
Kawasaki GPz750-'84	May '84	4A/F	739.0	12.114/110.97	135	502	37–47	120
Kawasaki GPz1100-'84	May '84	4A/F	1089.9	11.312/120.80	145	560	24–48	120
Kawasaki Eliminator-'85	April '85	4A/G	908.2	11.405/117.49	134	569	22–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja-'85	August '85	4A/F	908.2	11.175/123.79	151	535	32–41	131
Kawasaki Voyager-'84	March '84	6A/G	1286.1	13.346/97.61	116	882	28–44	142
Laverda RGS 1000-'84	December '83	3A/F	980.8	12.565/106.50	130	556	25–40	140
Suzuki GS550ES-'85	May '85	4A/F	572.3	12.551/106.50	119	447	33–48	133
Suzuki GS700E-'85	January '85	4A/F	699.5	11.978/112.21	125	485	27–53	140
Suzuki GS1150E-'85	June '85	4A/F	1135.4	11.032/121.78	146	529	30–55	138
Suzuki GS1150ES-'84	October '84	4A/F	1135.4	11.268/122.44	148	542	26–51	122
Suzuki GV700GL Madura-'85	Nov./Dec. '84	82 deg. 4D/G	698.5	13.307/102.15	111	546	23–45	143
Suzuki GV1200GL Madura-'85	February '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1165.9	11.364/117.18	140	576	28–45	131
Suzuki GV1400GD Cavalcade LX-'85	August '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1360.4	12.881/101.12	115	806	24–49	155
Suzuki VS700GLF Intruder-'85	July '85	2D/G	699.7	12.998/101.01	112	442	44–63	135
Yamaha FJ600-'84	July '84	4A/F	598.8	12.468/105.63	126	435	32–50	129
Yamaha FJ1100-'85	April '85	4A/F	1097.6	11.002/123.28	147	543	30–47	138
Yamaha FZ750-'85	June '85	45 deg. 4A/F	749.6	11.317/118.57	140	485	31–50	129
Yamaha Maxim X-'85	May '85	4A/G	697.3	11.779/113.63	121	505	25–47	135
Yamaha RZ350-'84	July '84	2A/F††	347.4	13.529/97.61	111	357	26–53	122
Yamaha RZ500-'84	September '84	4D/F††	499.7	12.053/112.64	136	439	25–37	N/A
Yamaha Venture Royale-'84	March '84	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	12.759/101.46	124	752	37–53	137
Yamaha V-Max-'85	May '85	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	10.922/127.47	151	596	23–32	137

*__A__-Transverse, __B__-Vertical (single-cylinder only), __C__-Horizontally Opposed, __D__-Tandem Vee, __E__-Transverse Vee, __F__-Chain Final Drive, __G__-Shaft Final Drive, __H__-Belt Final Drive, __I__-Horizontal Longitudinal; † indicates a calculated top speed; †† indicates a two-stroke engine

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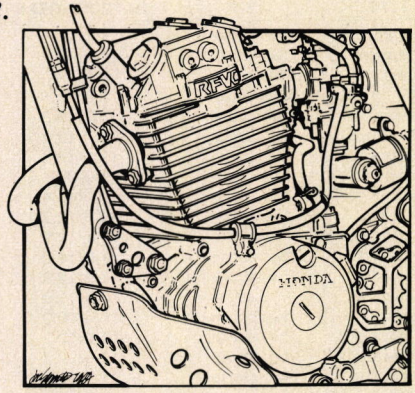
Once Upon A Thumper

The sound of thunder rode.



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• It's hard to tell just when the sound of a big four-stroke single first made its imprint on my imagination. But one image persists, cued up for instant replay on my memory video. Here it is:

I'm mowing the front lawn of the family house in Ohio. Making the turn around the elm tree, I hear the sound approaching—a low, thumping note, like a loose bass drum, but plainly produced by internal combustion. First I look up, expecting a biplane, but the sky is empty. Then, as the sound gets louder, I spot a rider approaching. It's Hap Clatterbuck, rumbling past astride a new Matchless. He smiles, gives me a casual wave and turns left on Orchard Hill Road as the resonant pulses fade into the distance.

I stand transfixed, gripping the push mower's wooden handles, projecting myself down the road in the wake of that lusty thunder. I am a wretched freshman; Hap is a senior, a man of means and stature. I'm sure he abides no crap from the principal, that he drinks beer at lunch and has fun with the cheerleaders. A guy who rides a motorcycle that sounds like that has to be a man of power.

The *sound* of power. Or, the power of sound. Or both. That relationship, I would later conclude, was the basic equation in American riders' cultural bond with big Singles, and with their Siamese-siblings, Vee-Twins, which are fundamentally just double Singles. And although the thumper spawned two-headed brethren in varying forms—parallel, opposed, and so on—the genetic connection between Single and Vee maintained the common traits of the breed: tall, narrow, loud and fast. Those thunder-grunt machines were tangible echoes of the past, hammered into the national consciousness over nearly a century of booming industrial growth. Whatever analogy best portrays the big-inchers' appeal—galloping stallion, steam locomotive, punch press—clearly their lineage was well forged early on, and tempered these past half-dozen decades.

But, as you've surely heard, those prominent pulses of yesteryear have lost much of their former resonance. These days, on the street, trail and track, the thunder has been muted by the constraints of social responsibility. And the blame for that historical hush-up usually is placed on the influx of two-strokes in the mid-'60s. Citizens who found marginally muffled Harleys offensive were galvanized by the shriek of the Japanese Killer Bees. The valveless Twins and Triples swarmed noisily upon the boulevards, and their solo-piston cousins buzzed in the woods, hills and deserts.

Of course, few of those imports left the factory as ear-splitting tone transmitters. That result traced from the old Yankee spirit of tweak and tinker, based on the conviction that faster is better, and that louder is faster. So by the end of that decade—not the quietest in American history—the legislative gears had turned. Majority opinion declared that quieter is better. The country's volume control was faded down in the '70s, but the four-stroke-loving brotherhood of the Sons of Thump heard only bad noise driving out good sound.

In retrospect, of course, the swing of the pendulum seems almost predictable. Big-bore four-strokes had long been tolerated, their numbers relatively few. But the huge market surge of the '60s, plus the two-stroke's public broadcast in a whole new register, moved them into the mainstream as a Social Issue.

Even now dirtbikes remain objects of several state governments' quietude campaigns. A California proposal would fix sound levels at 99 dB for motorcycles with off-road registration. In the sound test for the Hi-Mountain Enduro, the Husqvarna 510TE I rode logged 99 exactly. Most of the two-strokes were more than a bit louder.

But loudness is only a part of the issue here; what we're really talking about here is the contrast between the *kinds* of sound—and power—produced by two- and four-stroke engines. Not just the old torque/horsepower comparison; two-strokes can be tuned for plenty of torque. The difference in the nature, and the sound, of their outputs is simply a matter of time.

Former journalist and two-stroke technophile Gordon Jennings once posted a handy axiom that the two-stroke engine made a bit more than half the power of a four-stroke, twice as often. So a thumper pumps about twice the urge of the ring-dinger, half as often. I don't know whether or not engineering figures confirm that formula, but it serves nicely to illustrate the timekeeping natures of the two designs. Because that distinction in tempos, the spaces between the beats, underscores the way we perceive the disparate sounds of power.

Here we must turn to the page on psychophysics—the functional relations between the mind and physical phenomena. Or, in terms of moto-sounds, how we feel about what we hear; the nature of those sensory connections between rider and machine. So the issue turns from how fast we go, to how we go fast, including the manner in which we experience motorcycle performance. If the thumper devotees indentify with Casey Jones, the two-stroke folks are fans of Speedy Gonzales.

Perhaps this distinction is simply framed by our own personal cadence, the individual sense of synchronicity that guides our choices in tools and toys. Listening to the same rock band, you might hear mostly the lead guitar and synthesizer, while I tune into the bass and drums. The typesetting for this column was done on a computer, but the original copy issued from the 1948 Underwood sitting before me right now. The computer hums; the typewriter clatters, and it's the sound I prefer. And although the computer surely is faster, the Underwood better suits my own tempo. For me, aluminum baseball bats and "steel wood" golf clubs fall into the computer's category. I know they work, but they don't *sound* right.

Recently the sounds of thumper power have returned to winners' circles in enduro and desert racing. And the Battle of the Twins has showcased the big Vees on roadracing circuits. But most of us old geezers know that time was on our side. As they used to say in New Orleans, well before Kawasaki's ad campaign, *"Laissez les bons temps rouler."*

Call it The Revenge of the Valves. Sounds like good times to me.

—T.J. Rafferty

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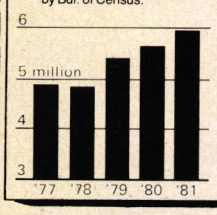
If you like to ride a bike for fun...learn how to fix it for profit! Can you imagine a better way to earn your living whether you choose to work in a cycle shop for somebody else or decide to start your own cycle repair business. Now, thanks to North American, there's a fast, easy way to get training at home in your spare time. No need to quit school or job. Experts show you step-by-step everything from minor tune-ups to major overhauls.

New Motorcycle Riders Year After Year

Cycles are big business



Registered motorcycles in the U.S.A. Source: Stat. Abs. of U.S.A. prepared by Bur. of Census.

Motorcycle registrations increased by more than one million in the five years from 1977 to 1981. There were nearly 6 million registered motorcycles in 1981—the latest year for which figures are available—and they all require maintenance.

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Motorcycle Shops Employ Qualified Mechanics. Has your bike ever been out of action waiting for needed repairs? Some shops don't have enough mechanics to take care of everyone as fast as they like.

Graduation from this course does not insure that you will get a job. To find out how our graduates have done, send for our job placement record.

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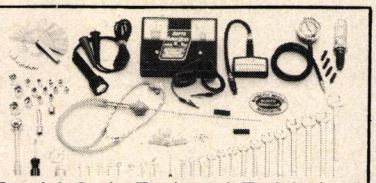

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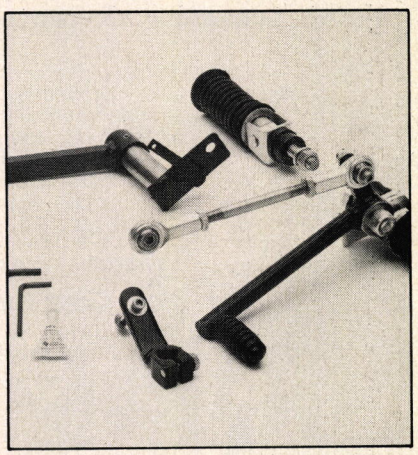
Motomart

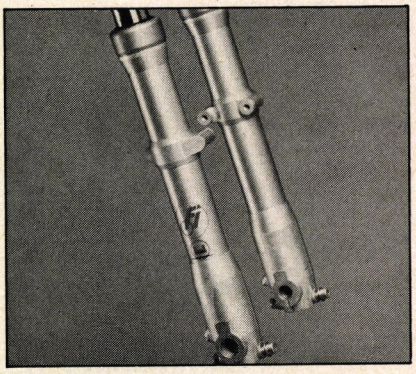
Summer deals for hot wheels.

The Pressure's On: And Michelin has the gauge to check it, with a 0-170-psi scale that reads in 1-psi increments up to 45 psi, for use on ATV and motorcycle tires. Also, the 18-inch-long rubber hose has a swiveling brass gooseneck that adjusts for those hard-to-reach valve stems. A rubber casing protects the gauge, which comes in a plastic carrying case. Suggested retail price is $25 from Motorace, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 861, Wilbraham, Massachusetts 01095.

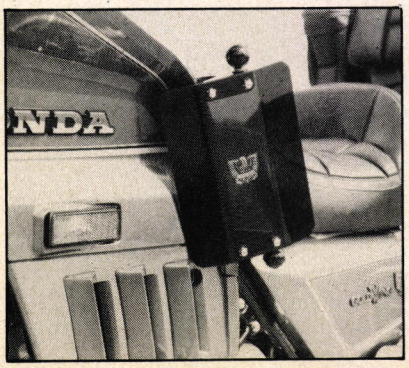


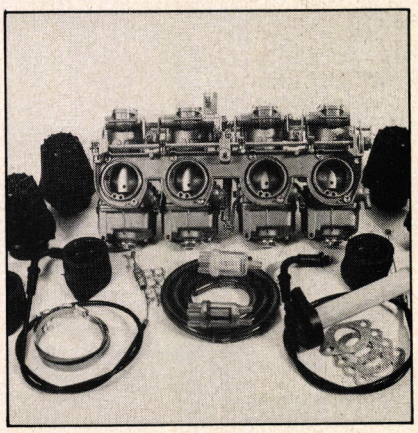
Get A Leg Up: With Spec II rearset control kits, that is. Spec II says its kits contribute both to a balanced riding position and increased ground clearance, and use aircraft-quality Heim-joint shift linkages. Rearset kits are available for RD250/350/400, SR500, Seca 550, Maxim 650, Seca 750, and 650 twin Yamahas, and Kawasaki's GPzs. Suggested retail prices start at $126. Order from Spec II, Dept. CG, 102 E. Prospect Ave., Burbank, California 91502.

Cherry Annie Returns: No matter how you pronounce it, Ceriani forks are back, available from Storz Performance. Made by FI of Italy, the forks come in 38mm and 42mm stanchion tube diameters, and can be supplied with an adjustable damping feature. Light-alloy extrusions are used for the sliders, and Storz claims the chrome-vanadium stanchion tubes are exceptionally light and strong. The 38mm fork retails for $550, and the 42mm goes for $590. To find out more, contact Storz Performance, Dept. CG, 1362 Tower Square No. 2, Ventura, California 93003.



Gold Wing Air Wings: Most fairings just part the air; only rarely do they provide a way to use it for the rider's benefit. Baker Built Products' Air Wings can change that situation, though. Air Wings are adjustable air deflectors that, according to the manufacturer, either can direct airflow toward the rider for cooling, or pull up air from around the engine for warmth. They fit 1980–85 Honda Gold Wings, Honda Silver Wings and all Yamaha Ventures, and retail for $47.20 with black brackets, or $57.20 with chrome brackets. Get your wings from Baker Built Products, Dept. CG, Route 1, Box 128, Ohio City, Ohio 45874.





Italian Heavy Breathers: Rivera Engineering is now importing Malossi carburetor kits using Dell'Orto carbs. Each kit comes complete with carbs, air and fuel filters, fuel lines, gaskets, throttle and cables. Carburetors range in size from 30mm to 37.5mm, and some come with accelerator pumps. Kits are available for Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki and Kawasaki multis, with prices ranging from $304 to $515. For more information, contact Rivera Engineering, Dept. CG, 6416 S. Western Ave., Whittier, California 90606.

Super Shoes: Fieldsheer's Super-Pro MX boots won't have you dancing like Fred Astaire, but they can help you hotfoot it around a motocross track. The boots feature full padding, steel toe caps, speed laces, Velcro tab closures and triple stitching in all stress areas. Plus, the Super-Pros come in white/black, white/red and white/blue in sizes 5-14, and have a suggested retail price of $119.95. For more information contact Nelson-Rigg USA, Dept. CG, 5082 Bolsa Ave., Unit No. 109, Huntington Beach, California 92649.

MOTORCYCLE OF THE YEAR

SILVER BULLET AWARDS:

Moto-'85 in review—and in chrome.

BY CHARLES EVERITT

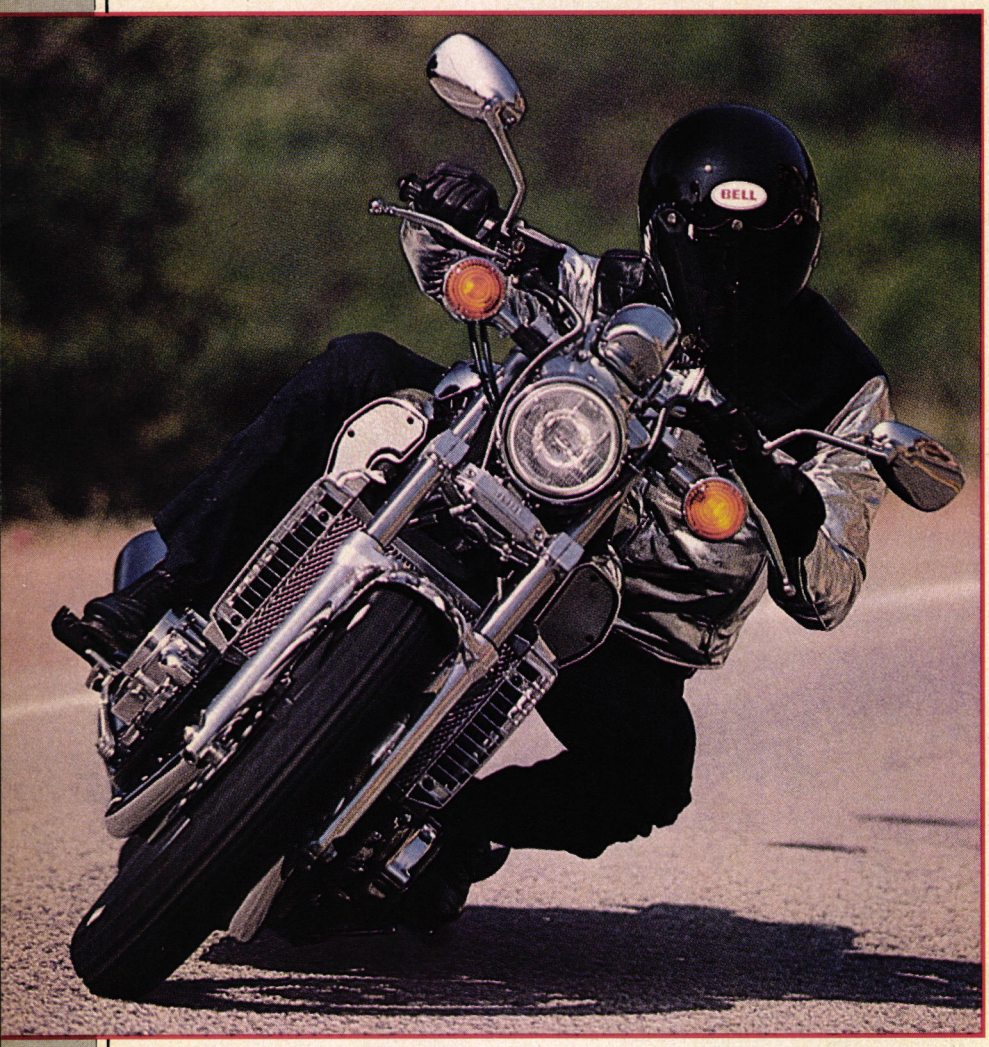
Yes, it's that time of year again—time for motorcycling's best and brightest to stand up and be counted; time to reward excellence where we find it, and rap knuckles where we don't; time, in short, to present CYCLE GUIDE'S Motorcycle Of The Year awards. And to the victor goes the Silver Bullet, a shining coat of richest, purest chrome.

As we've stated since the inauguration of the Silver Bullet awards two years ago, we don't indulge in meaningless categories here, because we find categories boring—restrictive, boring and cumbersome. And motorcycles are supposed to be anything but. We're talking significance, picking bikes that not only have an effect on the present, but that affect how we think about motorcycling, ones that will forever alter the course of moto-history, for good or for ill. There's simply no room for maybes, what-ifs and could-have-beens.

There's plenty of talent to choose from in 1985, too. And this year we selected 10 of the most significant bikes to emerge from moto-'85. Not that 10 were required; there's no inherent magic in that number, and it could just has easily been nine, or 19. But only one got the distinction of the Silver Bullet.

Each of the contenders, though, reflects what an important year 1985 has been for motorcycling. Because in 1985, the manufacturers have indulged in fresh, new thinking, not only to retain their existing audience, but to attract new blood, as well. This year we've seen innovative technology, the fragmentation of the cruiserbike class and increasing specialization in *every* class. Plus, we've witnessed the arrival of motorcycles that—a couple of years ago—would have gone to overseas markets and stayed there; we've seen the revival of what was thought to be a dead class, trials bikes; and we've watched as the manufacturers have asked American riders how they want their motorcycles designed, and then delivered them, precisely to spec. And there are rumors of even greater things to come.

All in all, then, 1985 has been a banner year for motorcycling. So come with us now and see the moto-year in review. A few words of caution, though: If your eyes are especially light-sensitive, you might want to reach for a pair of dark glasses, because—that's right—we chromed *another* one. •



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 ROBIN RIGGS

Yamaha V-Max

Riding the nose of the Silver Bullet.

• No doubt about it; despite an unusually fierce level of competition, this year's Cloak of Chrome—the Silver Bullet award—gets draped over the broad, muscular shoulders of Yamaha's V-Max, the meanest, most outrageous and most thrill-intensive motorcycle in all of moto-'85.

In fact, almost any discussion of the V-Max involves boatloads of superlatives. This is the most powerful, hardest-accelerating production motorcycle ever offered to the public, and in CYCLE GUIDE'S annual high-speed, knock-down, drag-out performance brawl, the Quickest and Fastest competition (July 1985), the V-Max strode off into the distance with top honors. Moreover, the Yamaha has a certain techno-appeal, too, with its V-Boost system, which at 6000 rpm gorges each cylinder with mixture from a pair of the bike's four carbs. The automotive world might have seen such thinking before, but motorcycling hasn't, and it helps make the V-Max one of the most formidable vehicles in the land—especially when the revs hit 6000, the V-Boost system begins its act, and the beast tries to walk on its hind legs.

Just the same, though, outrageous performance—even the V-Max's level of pure, unrestrained fury—doesn't ensure a bike a shot at the coveted Silver Bullet. Instead, the V-Max gets the Bullet because of larger considerations. First, the V-Max sharply defines the widening schism between traditional cruiserbikes and performance cruisers. And the Max does that by its relentlessly single-minded pursuit of one goal: straight-line performance, to beam its rider from here to there in a little more than a heartbeat. Second, the bike demonstrates what Yamaha was willing to give up—a measure of comfort and handling performance—in order to achieve that goal; indeed, the Max shows what Yamaha believes *con-*

sumers are willing to do without to have such fierce acceleration. And the V-Max also points up Yamaha's willingness to risk potential government intervention, by building a 145-horsepower two-wheel rocket sled, and then flaunting its ferocity in television ads.

Those are important considerations, ones that ultimately led to our choosing Yamaha's V-Max as the Bike Of The Year. The V-Max will be a motorcycle to remember, one that will influence the future of motorcycling, because it will force other manufacturers to respond in kind. There's a certain inescapable notoriety that goes along with being the builder of the most formidable motorocket around. And as a result, you can bet that work already has begun in the R&D departments of the other manufacturers, to build something that can shoot the V-Max out of the saddle. Because of the V-Max, the power wars are beginning anew—in earnest.

Continued

Yamaha FZ750

• You can't talk about the important motorcycles of 1985 without mentioning Yamaha's FZ750. The two are inextricably linked together, but not because the FZ is the quickest 750 on wheels—although it is—and not because it's one of the best-handling motorcycles ever built—although it's that, too.

No, the FZ750 owes its greatness to more fundamental considerations. And foremost among them is the philosophy that produced the FZ: Design the bike as an integrated, organic whole, not as a showcase for individual bits of techno-trickery. That thought might not be an entirely new idea, but Yamaha's execution of it is, and the firm used it to devastating effect, producing a motorcycle that forces literbikes to look to their laurels, and makes other sporters seem almost ill-conceived.

The FZ does have its own techno-trick, though, in the form of motorcycling's first five-valve head. And that piece of high-tech hardware bolts to an inline-four motor that accomplishes the same goal as its liter-size predecessor, the FJ1100. Namely, proving that the inline-four, the powerplant of the past, will remain the powerplant of the future, too.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

Honda RS750

• For the past two years, the Silver Bullet awards had been confined solely to motorcycles the public could find in any dealer's showroom. That's changed with '85, though, because of one motorcycle, Honda's RS750 flattrack machine.

And the reasons are simple. Until last year, American dirttracks had been Harley-Davidson's turf, completely and undisputedly. Challengers found life there brutally hard, and a constant stream of interlopers got carried out on their shields, if you will, never to be heard from again. Honda persevered, though, enduring defeat after humiliating defeat, to produce a winner, the RS750, which carried Ricky Graham and Bubba Shobert to one-two finishes in the Camel Pro Series Grand National Championship last year. In the bargain, the RS's success has all but driven Harley-Davidson underground to prepare a new challenger. Plus, the RS750 has become the machine of choice for many privateers, usurping Harley's dominance in yet another area. Overall, then, the significance of Honda's RS750 is unquestioned, because it has changed the face of American dirttrack racing, by beating Harley where some swore such a thing couldn't be done.

Honda Rebel

• There's something lacking in motorcycling these days, and you don't need a crystal ball to figure out what it is: new riders. And a motorcycle that clearly, unflinchingly targets new riders, one that owes its very existence to that cause, deserves inclusion here. Honda's Rebel is such a motorcycle.

But there's more at work here than simply aiming a motorcycle point-blank at entry-level riders; it's the way the Rebel and Honda are going about it. First, there's the bike's appearance, one of the most blatant rips of Harley-Davidson styling any manufacturer has yet attempted. Perhaps to good effect, too, because many people regard such styling as being typical of *all* two-wheel devices; say "motorcycle" to them, and they conjure up an image of a cruiser-bike, peanut tank, buckhorn bars and all. Moreover, Honda is mounting a media blitz for the Rebel, to the incredible tune of $5 million, to tout this bargain-basement—$1298—entry-level machine. What's most important, though, is that if Honda's gamble works, in retrospect this lowly 250 might be seen as the most significant bike of 1985. Or—if it fails—as one of the year's most expensive blunders.

Continued

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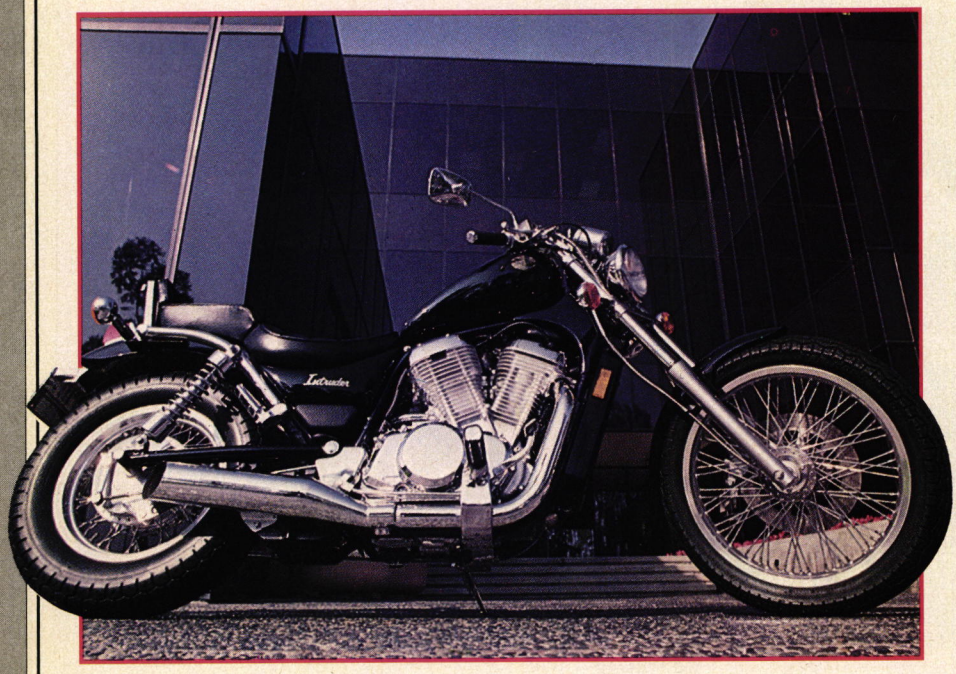
Honda VF1000R

• When American Honda ran its VF1000R up the flagpole, American sport riders snapped to and saluted. And for good reason: The 1000R represented the arrival of a triple-distilled bit of European exotica—at last. The R has all the right crendentials, too, with an extraordinarily wide powerband, gear-driven cams and a pedigree that includes Honda's own FWS F-1 roadracer and endurance weapons, wrapped in bodywork with the highest flash-quotient of any sporter to come down the pike.

Credentials and breeding all but guarantee the 1000R a Silver Bullet berth. What seals the deal, though, is the R's disappointing performance. Checking in at 578 pounds, the R's weight helps make it the slowest of the sporting literbikes through the quarter-mile, and impinges on its backroad abilities, as well. Worse yet, the narrow-focus R replaces what was one of the best all-around big-bore sportbikes of 1984—Honda's own VF1000F. The R, then, represents a step back in Honda's moto-evolution, and irreparably damages the myth of European invincibility. Consequently, other manufacturers might think twice before bringing Euro-spec hardware here. And that would be a pity.



Suzuki Intruder

• No question; a list of 1985's most significant motorcycles would be incomplete without Suzuki's Intruder. You might not think so, however, if you simply reviewed its specifications, because there the Intruder seems utterly unremarkable. We've seen copies of Harley-Davidson's 45 degree vee-twins before, liquid-cooled or not, and even the Intruder's heritage—born in America, but made in Japan—isn't anything new.

But rather than indulge in spec-sheet myopia, we view the Intruder from a different angle. For openers, the bike represents Suzuki's entry into one of motorcycling's most competitive markets, the vee-twin cruiserbike class. In addition, the Intruder's vee-twin motor provides a surprisingly high level of performance, and the ergonomics show that cruiserbikes *can* be comfortable. On the other hand, the Intruder's narrow focus reflects the current trend of increasing specialization among cruiserbikes. Most significantly, though, is the way the Suzuki combines its unremarkable elements into the cleanest-looking cruiser the Japanese have produced yet. In short, the Intruder stands out in sharp relief against a backdrop of me-too cruisers.

Yamaha TY350

• There's little difference between a bad idea and a good one presented before its time. Trials, then, could fit into either category, because more than a decade ago, when the sport was introduced to this country, American riders responded with a poorly stifled yawn and went elsewhere for their moto-thrills. As a result, the smart money would have figured that trials had gone the way of the dodo bird, the passenger pigeon and the funny hats trials riders used to wear.

Yamaha's betting against the smart money this time around, though, by bringing in the TY350. On sheer gutsiness alone, then, the TY makes the Silver Bullet cut. Because, after the great American trials debacle of the '70s, you'd think the manufacturers that were burned—and Yamaha was one of them—would steer clear of selling anything *like* a trials bike in the United States. Yamaha doesn't see it that way, though, and the TY's success seems to bear out the firm's gamble; the word is that TYs have sold out. Even more amazing is that other manufacturers have trials bikes waiting in the wings, too. So, single-handedly, Yamaha is starting the trials boom. Only this time might be the *right* time.

Suzuki Quadracer

• It's no secret that All-Terrain Vehicles are the success story in motorcycling these days. In fact, ATV's have become *the* growth leaders in American transportation, with sales leaping 600 percent in the last five years. And one ATV that's certain to help that trend continue is Suzuki's Quadracer.

The Suzuki moves away from the basic three-wheel ATV formula, though, with the addition of a fourth wheel. And that one simple item gives this ATV an enormous advantage over its three-wheel brethren. For example, the Quadracer steers with a precision that most other ATV riders can only dream about, and the way it tracks through rough whoops makes three-wheel pilots positively green with envy. Those virtures are being demonstrated on racetracks, too, where the Quadracer is cleaning house on its tripodal competition.

Moreover, Suzuki's Quadracer—and devices like it—might represent the future for ATVs, because the federal government, in the guise of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, has three-wheelers up for review, and possibly could ban them. Whatever the outcome, though, one thing's for certain: Because of the Quadracer, the ATV world will never be the same.

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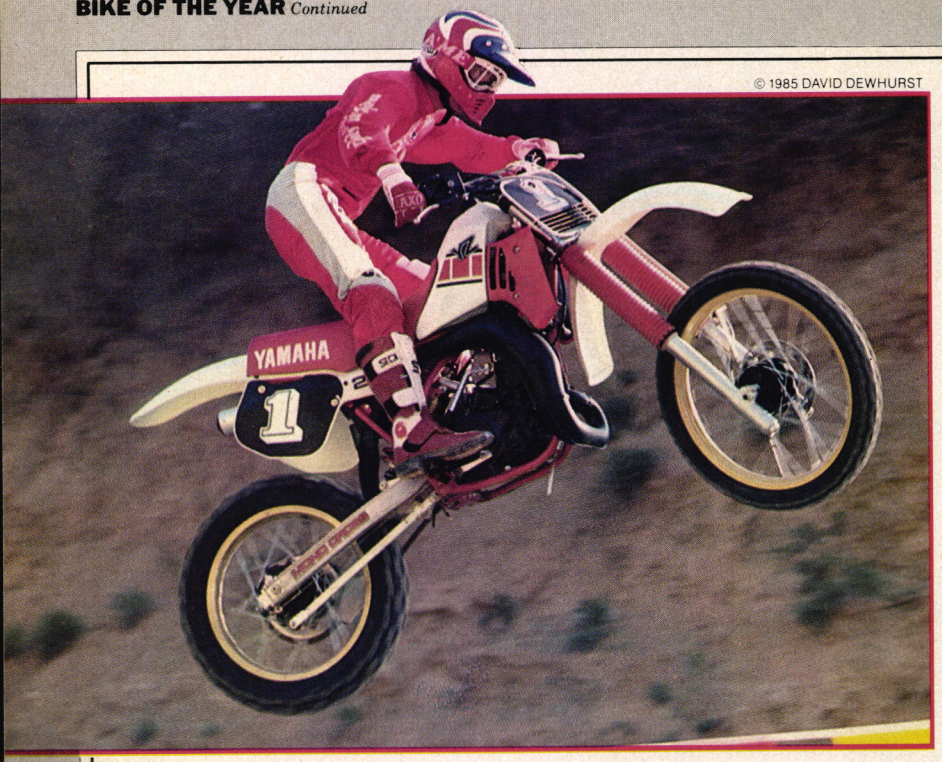

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Yamaha YZ250

• Today—right now—you can waltz into a motorcycle dealership and buy championship-winning, works-caliber motocross machinery. All you have to do is look in the phone book, find the address of your nearest Yamaha dealer, walk in and pay your money.

We'd say that was significant, and indeed, Yamaha's entire line of YZ motocross weapons shares that distinction. But we singled out the YZ250 for Silver Bullet honors, because it's a demonstrably better motorcycle than last year's YZ, a bike that was good enough to make Ricky Johnson national champion in the AMA's 250cc outdoor class in 1984. The situation is much the same for 1985, too; Johnson is once again riding a modified Yamaha YZ, beating riders on one-off factory machinery. And—once again—you can buy the very same bike. Few other manufacturers have put hardware with such winning potential within easy reach of the privateer motocrosser.

What's more, Yamaha publishes Wrench Reports that show you how to make your YZ250 a near-perfect copy of RJ's bike. And if you're good—really good—maybe you can duplicate RJ's success.

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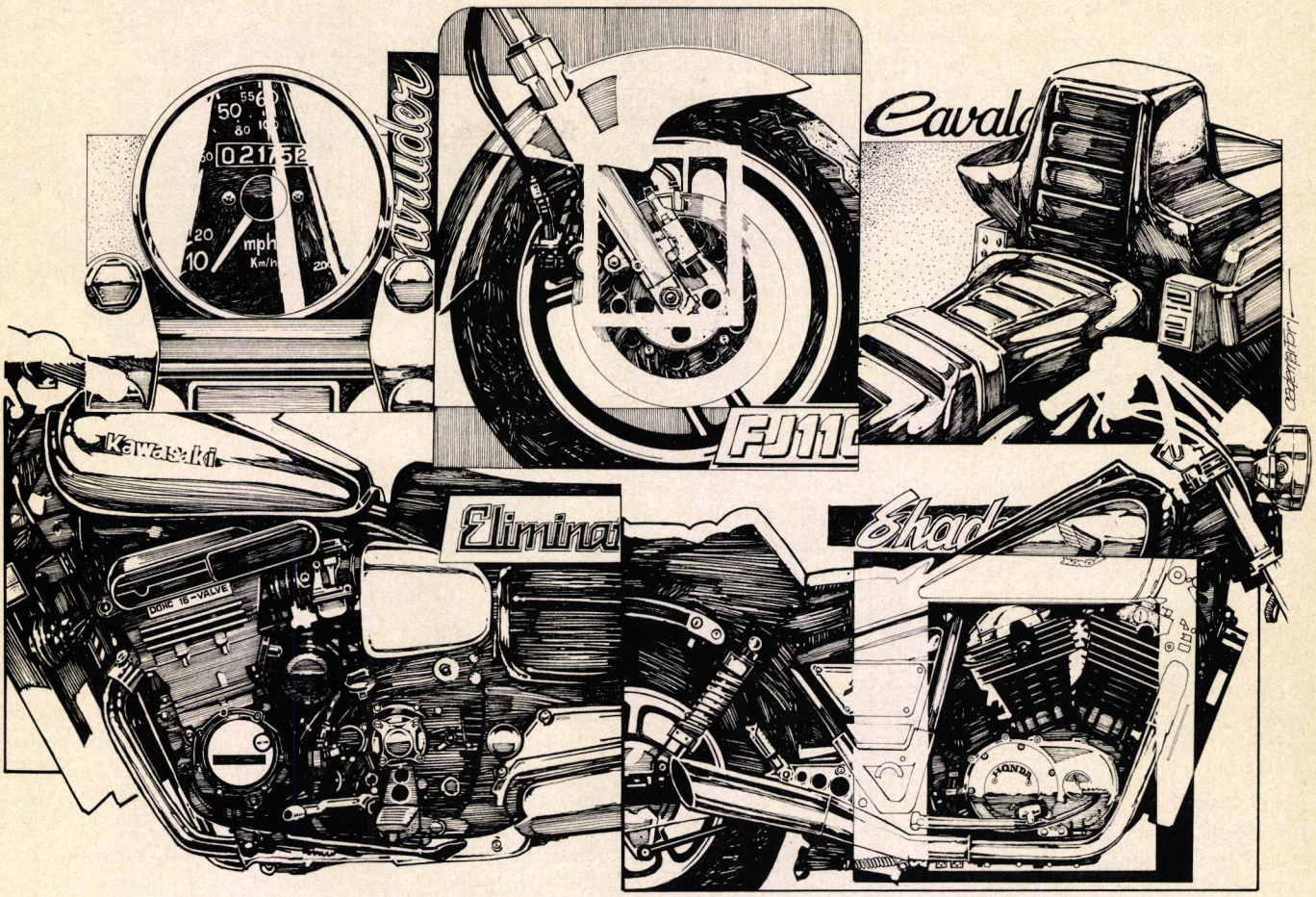
Honda Gold Wing Limited Edition

• Moto-'85 saw the 10th anniversary of Honda's Gold Wing, but also ushered in yet another permutation of the GL formula: the Gold Wing Limited Edition, the most luxurious, fully decked-out touring rig motorcycling has seen.

That by itself doesn't necessarily make the most ostentatious Wing yet a candidate for chroming, though, nor does its unflagging competence as the best touring bike money can buy. What *does,* however, is the Wing's enduring nature, and how that has taken shape in the Limited Edition. Because, over the past decade, the GL has faced countless challengers to its long-haul throne, and each time Honda simply upped the ante, allowing the GL to dispatch them all in typical fashion—quietly and efficiently. A decade of refinement has honed the Wing to almost sphere-like perfection, and it's become in the process a touring institution, led by the Limited Edition.

An expensive institution, too. With its $10 grand price tag, the Wing probes the boundaries of what people are willing to pay for a motorcycle. But, judging from the number of these high-roller Hondas on the roads, even that frontier remains precisely that—a frontier. •

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS



Taking a Look Around

Sometimes you can't tell where you are—or where you're going—without a milepost.

BY JIM MILLER

Every once in a while, a bike comes along that stands out like a signpost, one that marks a new direction for motorcycling. And it's appropriate, then, that we take time to highlight those milestones with the Bike Of The Year awards, to honor the motorcycles that distance themselves from the pack, or that set new standards by which others should be judged. Sometimes it's a single bike that alters those standards, because it represents a radical leap forward; Honda's original V45 Interceptor—with its superb combination of braking, handling, power and versatility—was such a bike.

Quite often, though, it's not a motorcycle's overall performance that leaves its impression on us, but rather some seemingly minor feature. And not all such features are examples of stellar engineering, either; sometimes they fall under the same heading as "If they can put a man on the moon, why can't they? . . ." But for better or worse, such features—and motorcycles—deserve recognition. This is not, however, the Silver Bullet equivalent of the Miss Congeniality award, because the bikes mentioned here are the ones with features that make us think about how we relate to motorcycles in general.

One such example from 1985 is Kawasaki's Eliminator, followed hard on its heels by Honda's VF1000R. With either bike, a single twist of the wrist brings home the joy a lusty midrange and a wide powerband can produce, whether you use such power for patrolling the urban jungle or lunging through the twisties. Occasionally we might enthuse about the kinesthetic thrill of a peaky motor, but often that fascination has all the permanence of a one-night stand. Take a motor with a well of horsepower deep enough to make a multispeed transmission seem redundant, though, and one quick blast of the throttle can make us forget the thrill of an 8000-rpm power rush. An idle-to-redline powerband can hide a multitude of ills, too. With something like the VF1000R's vee-four, which feels like it makes usable power down to single-digit rpm, you can *almost* forget—if not forgive—the Honda's other shortcomings.

At least, that is, until warm weather hits. Then, when the VF-R's full fairing traps enough heat to make Tucson, Arizona, seem arctic, we're reminded that

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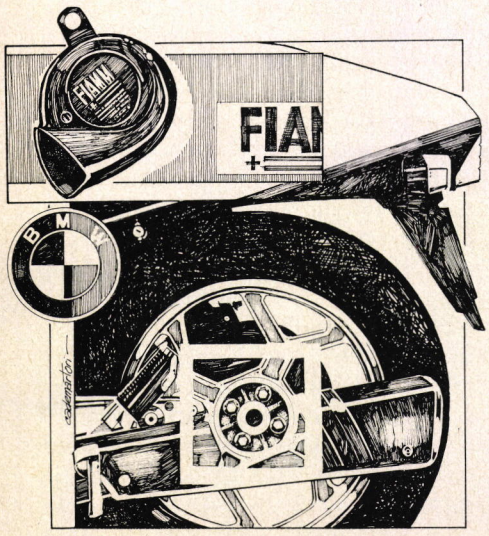
precious few fully faired bikes—sport or touring—do much to keep their liquid-cooled engines from roasting the pilot like a Christmas goose. Honda's Gold Wings are the notable exceptions here, but that's due as much to the flat-four engine layout as it is to the GL's fairing. And even the Wings present a missed opportunity, because when the frost is on the pumpkin, those same Btu pouring out of the fairings on other bikes can be as welcome as an unmade bed to a cat.

The fiberglass and ABS plastic on a touring bike shrouds more than the rider, too, as anyone who's tried to change—or in some cases, even *see*—the rear tire on most full-dress tourers will attest. But just about the time the invisible rear tire became accepted as part of the ante for turn-key touring, BMW rolled out its K100s to prove it doesn't have to be that way. With its single-side Monolever swingarm and detachable luggage, the K100RT shows that a high load capacity doesn't necessarily require a roll-around toolbox for a simple tire change.

Centerstands make tire changes much easier, too, but apparently those devices are also likely to wind up on the endangered-specs list. So far, we've seen three new bikes—Kawasaki's Eliminator, Honda's VF1000R and Suzuki's Intruder—roll through our doors sans centerstands. That's not counting the Harleys, of course, which haven't been so equipped since H-D stopped calling sidestands "Jiffy stands." And although it's possible for a motorcycle to get by with only a single visible means of support, a centerstand certainly would make lubing the VF-R's chain—or checking the sight glass for the Intruder's oil—a lot easier.

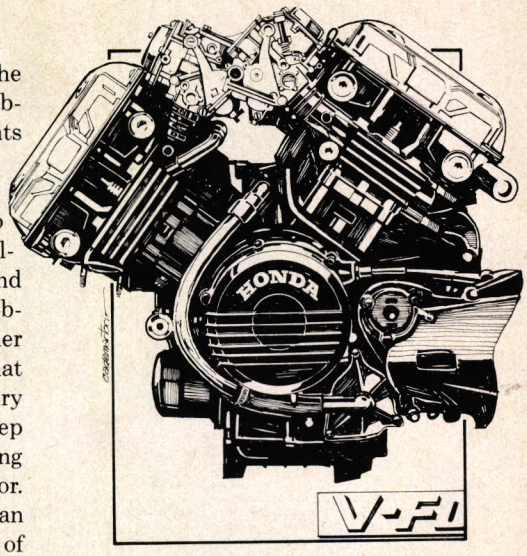
All-new bikes, such as Suzuki's Intruder, also offer the best opportunities to step back and look at those features the manufacturers consider important to the largest segment of the motorcycling public. And a quick glance at the instruments indicates one of the first tenets of the cruiser market: Keep it simple. So Suzuki's latest boulevardier comes with no tachometer to distract the rider. And although the vee-twin's wide powerband makes complaining about the tach's absence seem almost trivial, the Intruder also flaunts the kind of simplicity that considers a trip odometer an unnecessary complication. If you're planning to keep track of fuel mileage or trip length, bring along your notepad and pocket calculator.



A few years ago, simplicity came to mean low-maintenance, and reducing some of the drudgery involved with motorcycle ownership became the major thrust behind many innovations, particularly on cruiser-bikes. Nowadays, though, simplifying the owner's life by eliminating the mundane maintenance associated with adjusting the ignition, clutch or valve lash isn't enough. By 1985 standards, complication is getting to be judged strictly from the saddle, because the attitude seems to be that anything that makes life easier for the pilot—no matter how mechanically complex—is considered "simple." But when the quest for a featherlight lever feel gets us the Honda VT1100C Shadow's clutch—with its hydraulic pistons, separate engine-oil passages, metering orifices, bleed holes and abrupt, two-stage actuation—the design becomes difficult to justify as "simple."

Of course, the manufacturers don't spend all their efforts on making things easier just for the rider, particularly with turn-key touring bikes. The passenger is getting a larger share of attention, and Suzuki's Cavalcade lavishes more than ever on the "co-rider." Not only does the Cavalcade provide the rear seat with a four-position backrest, but passenger accommodations also include adjustable air bladders in the seat and backrest, two-position independently adjustable footboards and even separate volume and tuning controls for the AM/FM stereo. As passengers get the attention they deserve, more and more touring motorcycles are becoming first-class conveyances for *two*.

Passengers don't get the same kind of preferred status on sportbikes, but there are times when a passenger would be helpful—for instance, when you're riding a Kawasaki Ninja or Yamaha FZ750 and would like to know what's behind you. Kawasaki's GPzs were some of the first to exemplify the problem, with fairing-mounted mirrors that would serve better to examine the stitching on your jacket



sleeves than to view what's approaching from behind. Since then, however, it's become *de rigueur* to bolt mirrors to sportbikes' fairings, where, more often that not, the clearest rear view they provide is of your outstretched arms.

Anti-dive systems also seemed well on their way to becoming another bit of standard sportbike regalia, even though in many cases their effect on nose-dive during braking is almost imperceptible. That doesn't mean the units had *no* effect; the ones plumbed into front brakes often produce remarkably spongy lever feel. The FJ1100's setup only slightly affects the feel, but even *Yamaha* admits it doesn't do much about dive. Fortunately, if the FZ750 and Ninja 600R are any indication, the hydraulic units festooning the forks of sportbikes are on their way out.

Horns are another bit of two-wheel equipment that often wind up being more decorative than functional. It's almost embarrassing to press the horn button on most bikes, because the sound that emanates from the typical noise-maker barely will startle a pigeon. But in contrast to the asthmatic hooters found on most bikes, the dual Fiamms BMW fits to its R- and K-series bikes make enough noise that you nearly—but not quite—want to apologize for using them.

And it's those individual features, like the BMW's horns, the Eliminator's powerband or the Cavalcade's passenger accommodations, that often show we're making progress, by bumping the standards forward, inch by inch. The great leaps forward don't happen very often, and when they do, they're more often the result of a successful combination of small bits—like Yamaha's FZ750—than they are an earthshaking new design. But that's progress; and that's why sometimes we need to step back to take a closer look. •

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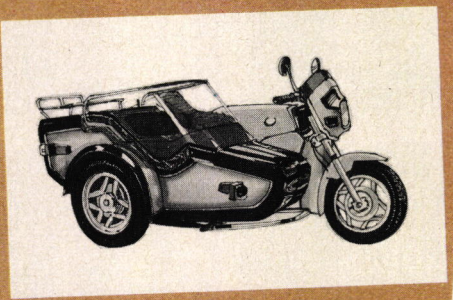

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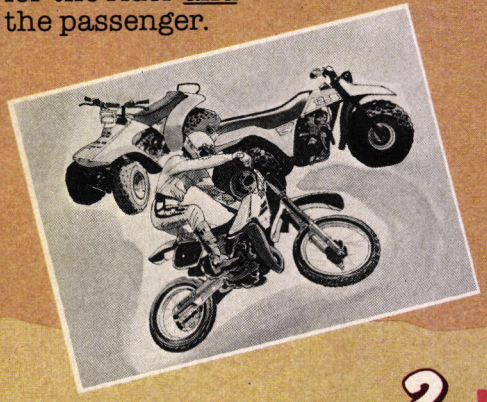

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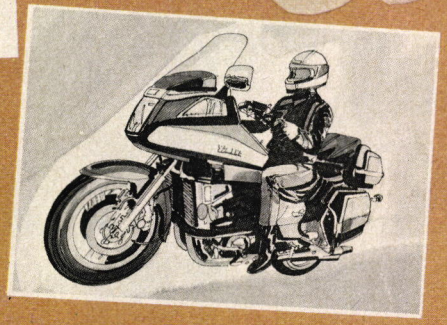

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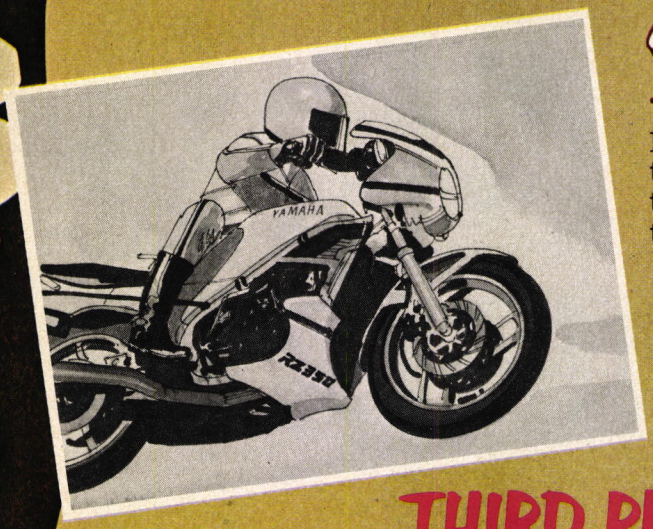

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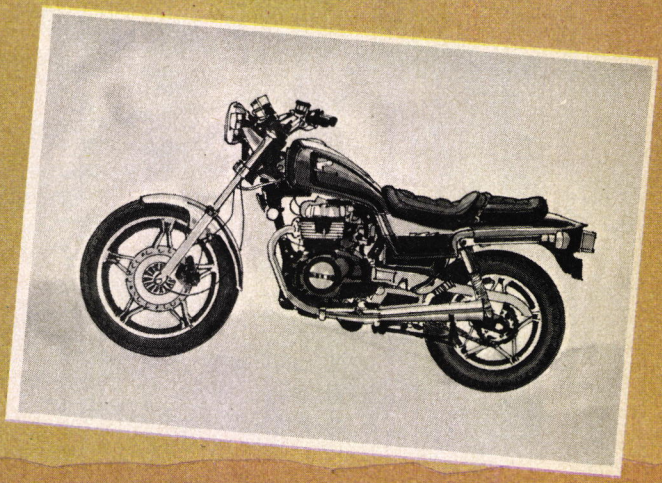

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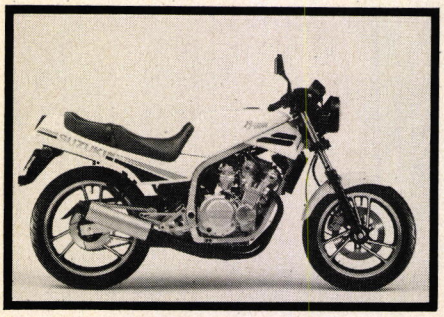


Suzuki's new GF250 in battle trim

Last of the 1985 250 warrior class.

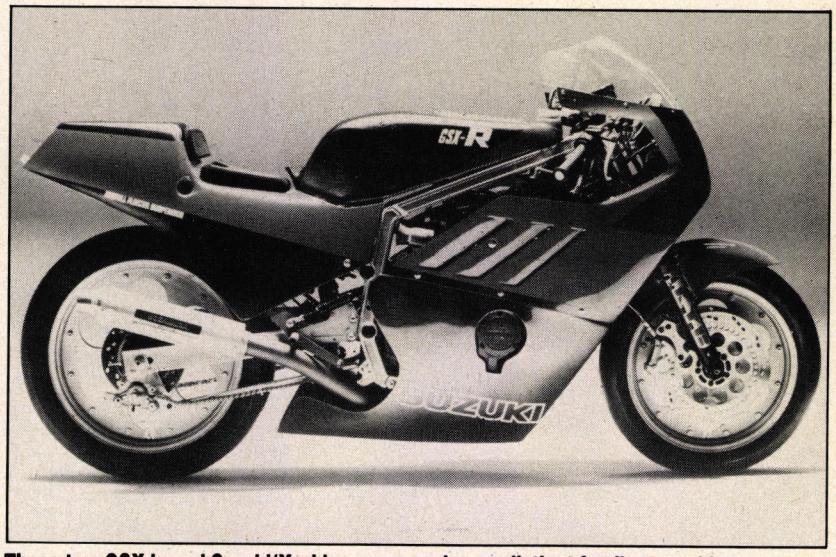
COMING SOON

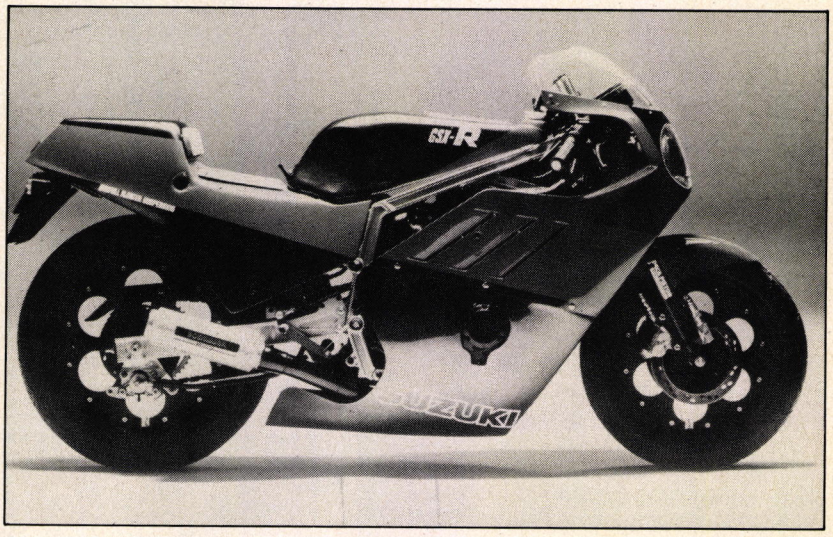
• Every month, it seems, a new 250cc wrist-rocket hits the streets in Japan. The domestic 250 sportbike wars are in full swing, with no end in sight. And the latest combatant in those Far East street skirmishes comes from Suzuki, the last of the Big Four Japanese manufacturers to play quarter-liter hardball for 1985. It's the GF250, and from its liquid-cooled four-stroke motor with six-speed transmission, to its twin-piston disc brakes, it looks to have the stuff to make its way in a world full of NS250R and FZ250 cutthroats. Reports from Japan indicate the GF can't take those trackworthy competitors head-on, though; the eight-valve, twin-carb GF is intended as more of a sport-tourer than a pure sport machine. Even so, the four-cylinder, 249cc GF is said to pump out a healthy 41 horsepower at 12,500 rpm.

No on-road performance claims have yet been made for the GF, but there is a claim that's worth noting. Suzuki spokesmen say the GF has a substantially redesigned Full Floater rear suspension system, one which allows 35 percent fewer components—and 54 percent less weight—than the old Full Floater design might require. The frame is box-section steel, and weighs just over 21 pounds, contributing to a claimed 306-pound dry weight for the new 250. Beyond that, its Posi-Damp fork and four-into-one pipe reflect current Suzuki-think. That thinking extends to marketing, too, because the GF—just like the rest of the current crop of Japanese 250 sportbikes—isn't for sale here.

• What might very well be for sale in the United States—though it's not yet certain—are a pair of Yoshimura Suzuki racebikes. First to come out will be a 400, based on the GSX-R400. Three stages of tune reportedly will be available, to cover the range from Novice to Expert. Full details aren't yet available, but the six-speed 400 is said to produce 70 horsepower at 12,500 rpm, enough to propel the 285-pound Expert version to a claimed 143 mph. The Novice model has a different fuel tank and weighs about 12 pounds more.

• Even less is known about the GSX-R750-based Yoshimura bike, though it's claimed to run a 12.5:1 compression ratio and produce more than 133 horsepower at 11,700 rpm. You'll find out more when we do—promise.





These two GSX-based Suzuki/Yoshimura racers bear a distinct family resemblance

And, based on early reports, a shared passion as well: winning races.

FEDERAL CASES

• In what some motorcycle industry sources claim is a model for future U.S. action, Great Britain's bike industry announced a voluntary 125-horsepower ceiling on motorcycles intended for British sale after March 1, 1985. Implementation of the program was delayed, however, and won't go into effect until January 1, 1986. The plan doesn't cover after-

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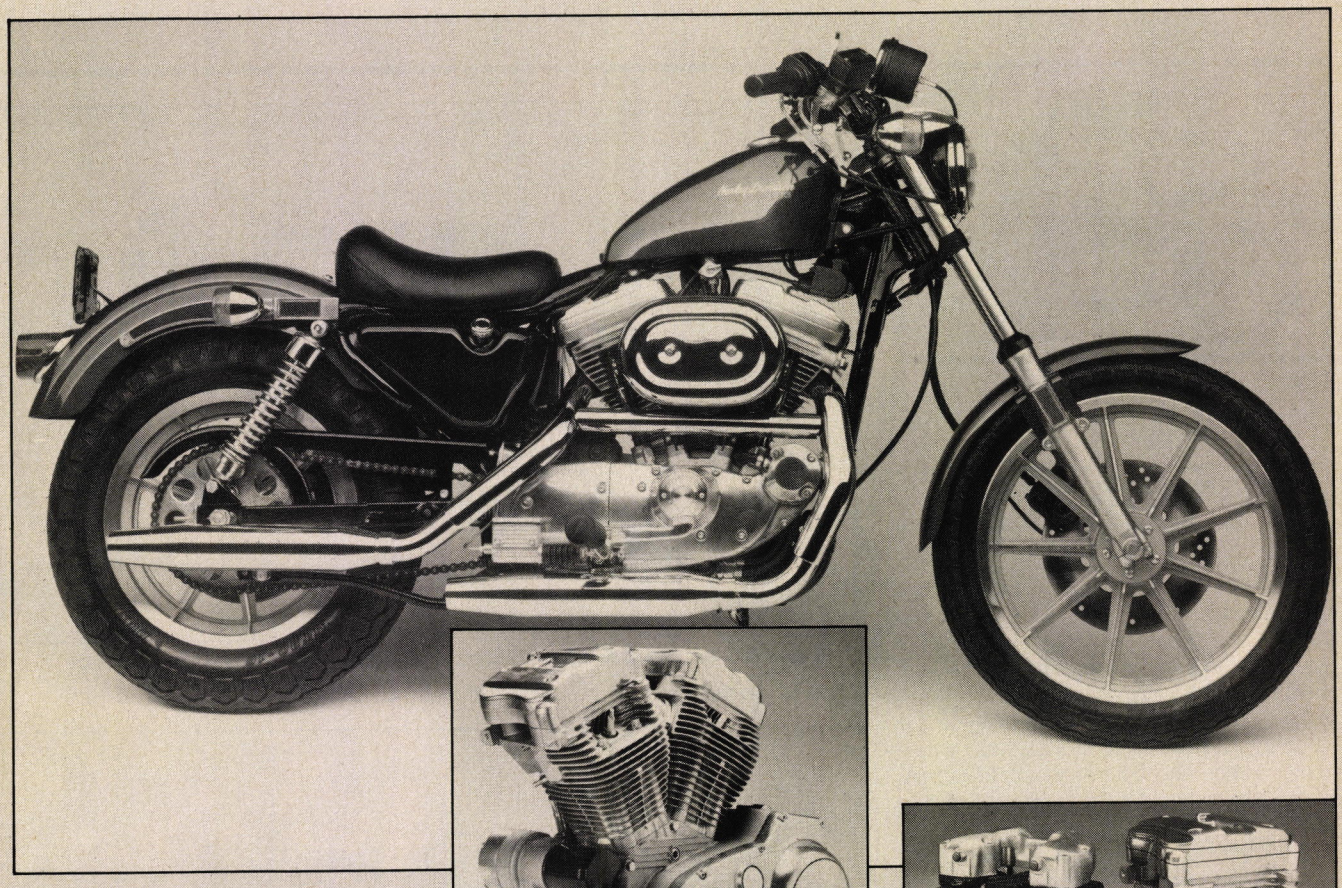
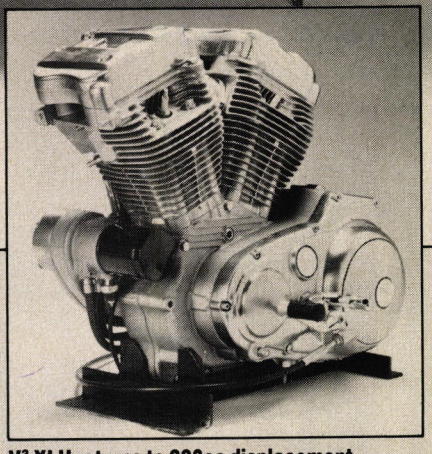
RIDE/REPORT:

1986 Harley-Davidson 883 Evolution Sportster

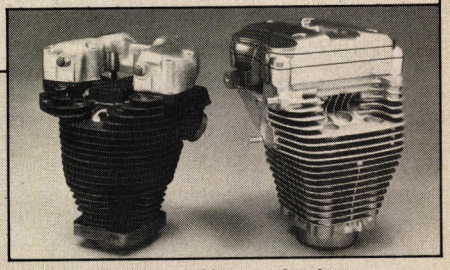
The Sportster is dead; long live the Sportster.





V² XLH returns to 883cc displacement

But with a 9-pound weight saving.

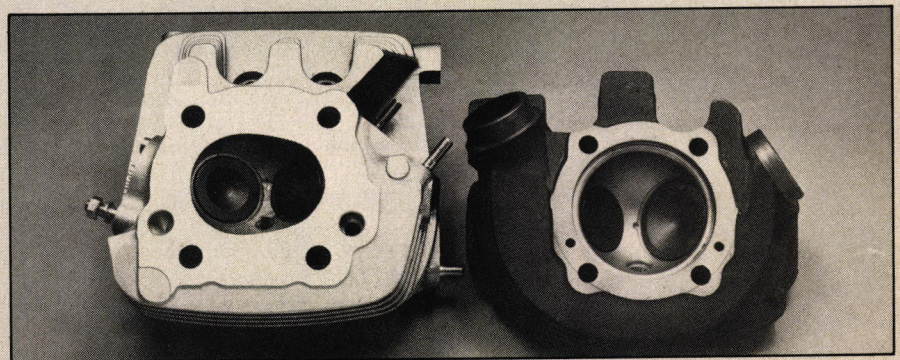


Old Sportster top end is completely gone

Lock, stock and cast-iron barrels.

• 1986 marks the end of an American tradition: the 1000cc Harley-Davidson Sportster. But there's no need to lament the 1000's passing, because it hasn't been dropped from H-D's lineup. Instead, it's simply been brought up to V² Evolution standards, and returned to the original XL's displacement of 883cc.

The '86 XLH marks a return to the Sportster's original intent, too. Just like its 54-cubic-inch predecessor, the latest V² Harley is an import fighter. In this case, though, the imports aren't Triumph, BSA and Matchless, but Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki and Kawasaki. And to give it some added punch in that arena, H-D dropped more than the displacement: At $3995, the 883 XLH checks in more than $900 less than its '85 counterpart. H-D's studies show Sportster sales to be extremely price sensitive, and by holding the ante below $4000, the company hopes the bike can induce riders—who might otherwise buy Japanese—into the H-D camp. As further enticement, Harley claims the



Bathtub combustion chamber replaces the classic hemispherical head

With their smaller valves and ports, the new heads bolster low-end punch.

sub-1000cc displacement promises owners a substantial break on insurance.

That displacement results from a 4.8mm bore reduction, from 81.0mm on the 998cc motor to the 883's 76.2mm—the same as the original XL's; stroke remains at 96.8mm. But the stroke is one of the few items that *didn't* change on the V² XLH motor; in fact, the Sportster redesign makes Harley's overhaul of its 1338cc vee-twins look like a tuneup. As on the bigger vees, the cast-iron heads and cylinder barrels have been replaced by aluminum barrels with H-D's Spiny-Lok cast-iron liners, and aluminum heads capped by three-tiered rocker covers. In addition, the XL uses the same 58 degree included valve angle, and the same tuning features—reduced port and valve sizes—to increase low-end torque. Plus, the 883 Sportster uses flat-top pistons and a new "bathtub" combustion-chamber shape that's claimed to produce more power than the "Side Squish" design on the 1338cc V² engines.

But whereas work on the Big Twins virtually stopped at the cylinder bases, the V² 883 has new crankcases, primary cover, crankshaft, con rods, camshafts, oil pump and lubrication system, and—a first for the XL-series—hydraulic lifters. A computer-matched set of gears drives the new cams, too, the result of H-D's efforts to reduce mechanical noise. Noise reduction played a major role in the 883's development, because for 1986 the EPA noise standard plummets from 83 to 80 dB, a 50 percent drop in the allowable noise emission. And one result of that tighter standard—and the XL's reduced displacement—is that the V² motor makes less power and torque than the 998cc twin it replaces; torque has dropped from a claimed 58 foot-pounds for the '85 XLH to 54 foot-pounds for the 883. Somewhat offsetting the lower power output is a claimed 9-pound reduction in engine weight, and a 10-pound drop overall.

That lengthy list of changes doesn't mean the V² Evolution Sportster is *all* new, though. Keeping the price below $4000 prevented Harley from incorporating such features as rubber engine mounts, a five-speed gearbox and belt final drive. As a result, the 883 Sportster routes its solidly mounted engine's power through a four-speed transmission and chain final drive. Moreover, the chassis cradling the V² motor is basically the same as last year's XLX, right down to the solo saddle, single front disc brake and cast wheels. But something else remains unchanged in the V² Evolution Sportster, too; namely, Harley-Davidson's original concept of what a street custom should be—updated, but with a strong sense of tradition. And, that, H-D hopes, will be irresistible to new buyers. —*Jim Miller*

Continued

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market performance parts, and it doesn't affect any model already on sale at the end of 1985. The limit is part of a nationwide project to make motorcycling more appealing to the British public (see After The Fact, page 39), and includes a reduction of emphasis on high-performance themes in motorcycle advertising. You can bet the program's progress is being noted in this country—by the manufacturers, the aftermarket and various elements of the federal government.

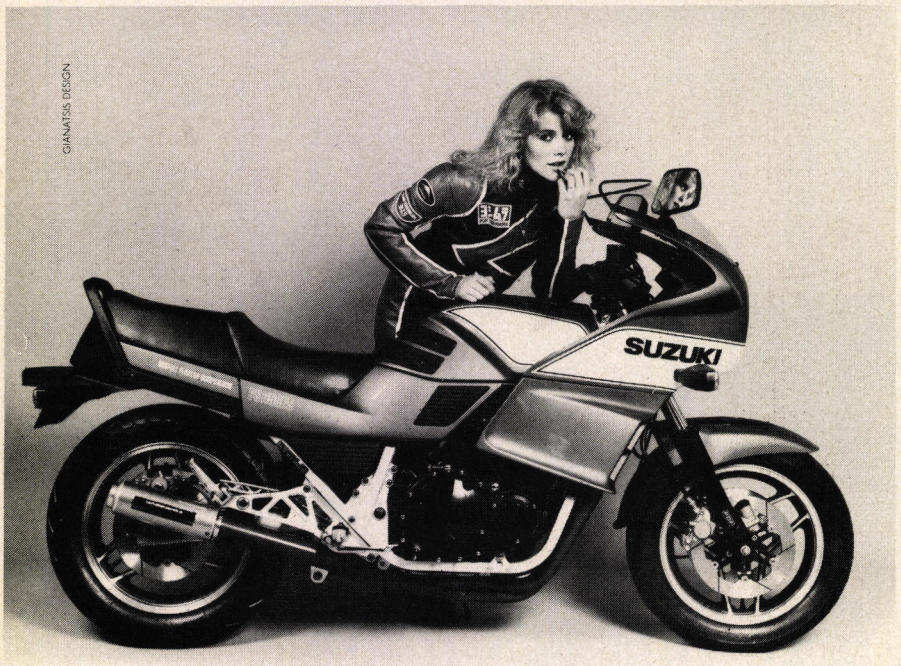
• With the first worldwide oil crisis, New Zealand dropped its national speed limit from 100 kph to 80 kph. Now, it looks as if a proposal to raise the limit back to 100 kph seems likely to pass. But attached to the proposal is a rider, in the form of a program of rigid enforcement of the new limit. Reportedly, the rider contains demands for stiffer penalties for speeding, as well as approval for the use of spotter planes, hidden radar traps, undercover traffic units with customized—and distinctly uncoplike— pursuit vehicles, and amphometers, pressure-sensitive strips placed at designated distances on the road which provide a speed readout. The rider also includes an estimate that fully one-half of the speeders will be nabbed.

• Still on that side of the world, you can once again buy black helmets in Australia. A ban on black helmets has been in effect there for years, because Australian safety experts believed the dark color made such helmets difficult to see at night. The ban's been lifted, though, reportedly because many riders were painting their helmets—including polycarbonate units—black after purchase, and authorities figured painting those non-fiberglass helmets posed a greater threat to rider safety than buying a black hat in the first place.

• For years, there have been only two paths running directly from Detroit to Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Now there's only one—if you choose to ride. One of the two crossings, the privately owned Detroit-Windsor tunnel, now has been closed to motorcycle traffic.

Two fatal late-night motorcycle accidents in 1983 set the stage for a motorcycle ban that was to have gone into effect in April 1984, but the AMA and other riders' groups worked out a compromise that allowed motorcycle traffic access to the tunnel during daylight hours. Now, however, the ban is complete. Spokesmen for the Detroit & Canada Tunnel Corp. say rising insurance costs, which would have more than doubled the cost of liability coverage for the tunnel had motorcycles been allowed, caused the closure. And the AMA reports that the no-motorcycle policy is being so rigidly enforced that some vehicles *towing* motorcycles on trailers have been turned back at the tunnel's mouth. The AMA is seeking alternatives to the ban.

• In the latest chapter of one of the longest-running mandatory-helmet-law dramas, Illinois House Bill 122 seems stopped for 1985. Through intensive lobbying, the Illinois Motorcyclist Association helped freeze the helmet bill in that state's House Transportation Committee. The bill has been assigned to a subcommittee for further study, which effectively



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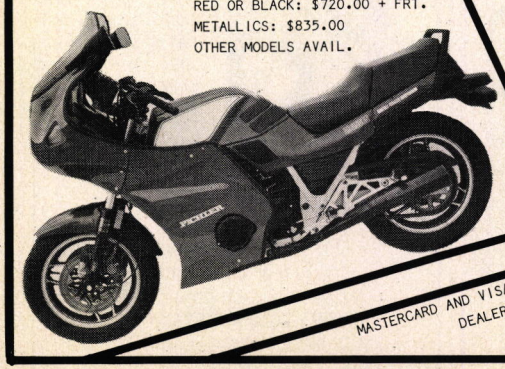

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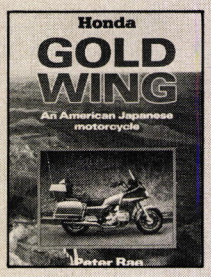
Book Review



Honda Gold Wing
An American Japanese Motorcycle
by Peter Rae
135 pages, $19.95
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• Writing a book about the king of touring bikes, Honda's Gold Wing, has built-in potential. The GL represents a major branching of motorcycling's mainstream, and such a book could be an exciting, insightful history. This one, though, isn't.

Many of the right elements are present, including a detailed chronology of the Wing, from the 1972 prototype flat-six AOK to the Aspencade, with enough photos of early design exercises to rivet Wing-nuts to their seats. Rae also begins with early British, U.S. and Australian magazine stories on the GL, and it's striking how much trouble the press seemed to have in pigeonholing what is now a touring benchmark. But the reviews end up being the book's *raison d'etre;* every time Rae attempts to make a point, he dredges up the reviews and uses them for support. There seems to no original thought on the author's part here.

Rae also has some problems figuring out why the Wing exists, and treats the reader to a dose of chauvinism at the expense of American riding abilities, riding habits and tastes in motorcycle accoutrements. It's out of place in a book about a motorcycle that's now both built in the United States and designed around American topography.

On the other hand, Rae's chapter on one-offs built from Gold Wings does have a place here, if only for its outrage factor, and includes a GL1000 endurance racer and the equally unusual Grüne Blitz, a GL motor stuffed into an Electra Glide frame. But what point there is gets dulled with wandering asides, as if the author had forgotten that the book was to be about Gold Wings, not his cronies.

In all, "Honda Gold Wing" would have been better pared down to 70 pages or so. At its full length, the book is neither a coffee-table piece nor a diehard's wishbook. It lies uneasily in between, and probably will satisfy neither the casual reader nor hardcore enthusiast. —*Larry Works*

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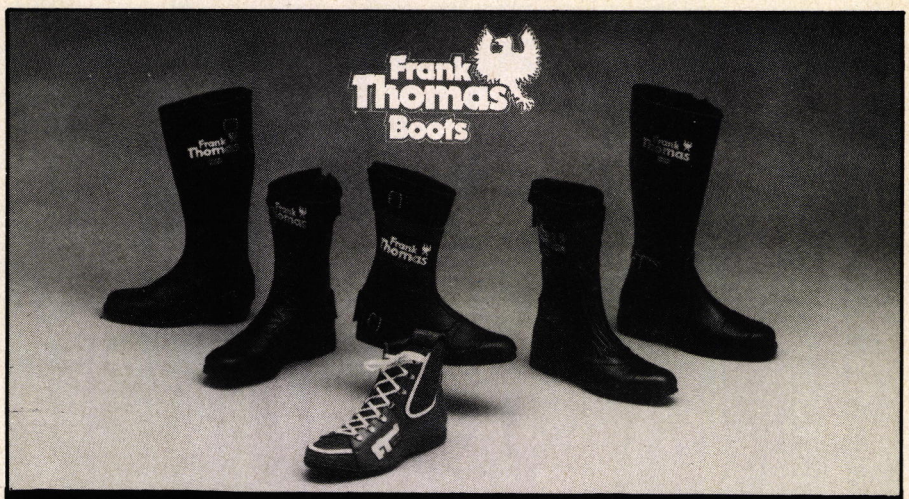

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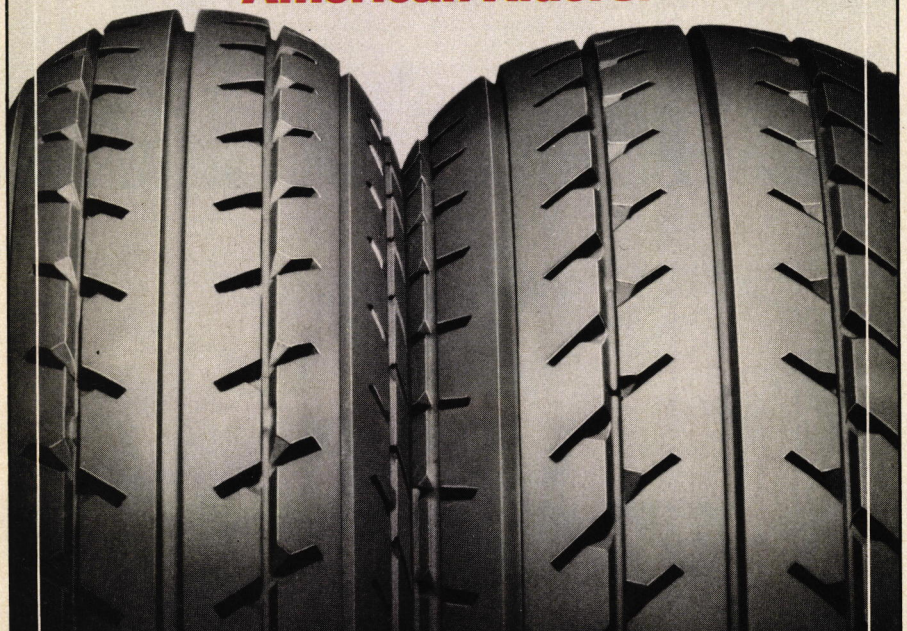

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stops a vote on the measure for this legislative session. Sixteen years ago, the Illinois Supreme Court declared a mandatory helmet law unconstitutional, and reintroduction of helmet laws—and their subsequent failure to pass—have been a regular feature of the Illinois legislative scene since then.

• Nevada also has ruled its mandatory helmet law unconstitutional. A district judge in that state cited Ninth Amendment protections in striking down the law, which he said singles out motorcyclists for prosecution. Insiders there say it's likely the issue will find its way to the Nevada State Supreme Court.

• If you're a California rider, you should know about Assembly Bill 412. The measure would, if passed, establish a rider-education program for California, funded by a $2 increase in the annual motorcycle registration fee. The bill also provides for a program of increased driver awareness of motorcyclists. California Governor Deukmejian vetoed a similar bill last year—and reportedly plans to veto AB412—after saying self-funded rider education lacks popular support. The AMA and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation want California riders to prove him wrong. Both groups are asking for a letter-writing campaign in support of the bill. If you agree, you can prove it by writing The Honorable George Deukmejian, Governor of California, State Capitol Building, Office of the Governor, Sacramento, California 95814.

HARD CASH

• It's long overdue, but it looks as if the big chill is finally wearing off the business of motorcycles. New projects, joint ventures and old businesses are sprouting up everywhere—or so it seems. For instance, there's talk that Harley-Davidson is ready to finalize its long-rumored overseas operation. Reportedly, it's a manufacturing/concessions/front-money deal not entirely unlike the arrangement John Z. DeLorean had in Ireland. Although details on the deal are not yet public, Harley Chairman Vaughn Beals has said the Motor Company is "Very close . . . closer than Harley-Davidson has ever been" to closing the deal. Industry speculators have said the economic climate in Germany might be conducive to such an arrangement. Thus far, though, no one's confirmed the location, but reports have come in that the deal *won't* take place in England.

• Even so, there *are* plenty of new businesses taking root in Great Britain. Our European correspondent reports Hesketh is on the verge of striking a bargain with aftermarket frame maker Mocheck Martin, an agreement that would include the rebirth of Lord Hesketh's brainchild, the Hesketh V1000. Rumor has it that Martin would both design and build the frame for a new Mk2 version. In addition, Martin would combine its aftermarket work with the production of complete motorcycles at Hesketh's Easton Neston factory, as well.

• Just up the road a bit, relatively speaking, is yet another moto-rebirth Over There. In what has to count as a miracle of staying power,

Triumph reportedly is back in business once again. British multimillionaire industrialist John Bloor bought the manufacturing rights and use of the Triumph name when the Meriden worker's cooperative failed in 1983, although the manufacturing rights to several models, including the Bonneville and the TSX, have been leased to another firm. That leaves Bloor's concern working out the bugs on the liquid-cooled, eight-valve, counterbalanced 900 Phoenix vertical twin first shown in prototype two years ago. Bloor is said to have had the bike in testing and development since then. The Phoenix reportedly will be built in a new 10-acre factory in Leicestershire, which will employ modern methods of robotic assembly—as well as a work force of 250.

• And here's yet another well-financed re-entry into the moto-market: As unlikely as it might appear, MV reportedly is scheduled for another go of it. In the completion of a plan that began more than five years ago, Hansen Gmbh, the former West German MV importer, will introduce three models based on old MV Agusta designs, with four-cylinder 750cc, 900cc and 1100cc machines. There's a modern twist to these new MVs though; the engines will feature four valves per cylinder. The bikes are being built in cooperation with former MV race chief Arturo Magni, but cannot legally be called MVs; reportedly they'll be sold either as Magni Agustas or Magni MVs. Hansen Gmbh is said to have well in excess of $1 million tied up in the project, which should be in full operation by model year 1986.

• Lest you imagine the motorcycle business is all beer and skittles these days, the plight of Laverda proves otherwise. The Italian concern has reportedly gone into voluntary receivership, and the program of "controlled administration" is set to continue for 24 months. Apparently, serious problems at Laverda began in 1982-83 with poor sales of 1000c Triples, and so a costly design project—a 750cc liquid-cooled Four—never got further than the prototype stage. Current plans call for a reorganization, followed by continued production at Laverda's Breganze factory. For the moment, the only Triples being produced are the SFC and the Corsa, but a new 350cc vee-three two-stroke is scheduled to debut at the Milan Show.

• There's a flip side of the coin to the lead item about Harley-Davidson. Although things seem set for a business coup in overseas motorcycle production, the Milwaukee firm reportedly has notified its dealers that all operations relative to the Trihawk project are, at least for now, suspended. The project reportedly was diverting resources from the motorcycle division, and until outside financing can be secured, the Trihawk is grounded.

RUMORS

• All the smoke belching forth from the rumor mill this month is nigh onto blinding. If just a fraction of that smoke coalesces into something substantial, you can bet that model-year

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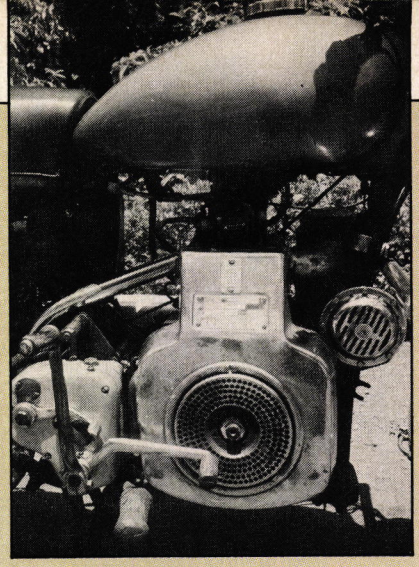
Diesel Enfield Bullet

A Bullet in name only.



6.5 hp, 250 mpg on tap

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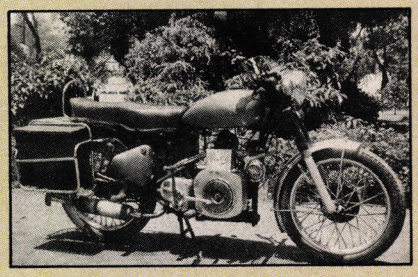


• Coming Soon—though perhaps at a fairly slow pace—is the world's first diesel-powered production bike. That's right, it runs on Diesel No. 2, just like the big rigs. The bike is manufactured near Bombay, India, and is basically a 1970 Enfield Bullet, but one with a twist: A 325cc Greeves Lombardini industrial pump engine is shoehorned into the frame. Top speed on the diesel Bullet is a claimed 56 mph, with acceleration that is, well, leisurely by today's standards: 37 mph in 13 seconds. But what else can you expect from a four-speed pump motor that's claimed to develop 6.5 horsepower at 3600 rpm, and yields 250 mpg in the bargain?

Aside from its engine performance, the bike has one feature that surely qualifies it as unique: The motor still can be used for its original purpose. With a pulley bolted to the side of the engine, the modified Bullet can be used for driving irrigation equipment, or as a power takeoff for other farm implements. Even if you'd rather not bite the Bullet in its entirety, not to worry; the manufacturer also sells engine kits, and you can install one in your own bike. There's a rumor of an electric starter in the works, too. So all of you Interceptor jockeys who want your bikes to be the envy of the Fuel Conservation Corps, the line forms to the right. —*Larry Works*

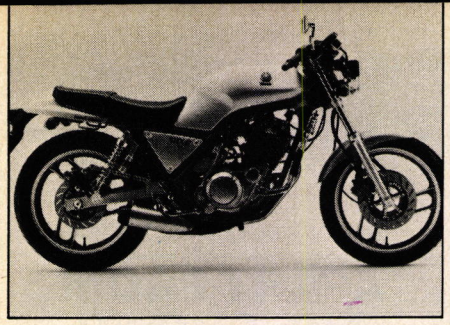
1986 holds plenty of promise. Take, for example, the Evolution 883 Harley-Davidson in Coming Soon this month. Granted, the downsize V^2 motor is a welcome change, but why did Harley go to all the trouble for a chain-drive four-speed, even one with an attractive buy-in of less than $4000? Why, indeed. Insiders say the 883 is viewed as a price-leader—but one that makes possible a new model in which price is not a principle design consideration. Sources in the know in Milwaukee confirm a larger version, said to be an 1100. Those same conduits hint at a five-speed transmission, a rubber-mounted engine and quite possibly a styling treatment unlike anything Harley's ever marketed before. The tail end of this choice morsel of gossip is that the bike will be an '86 model—count on it.

• While you're counting, start counting the days until the European introduction of the long-rumored BMW K75. Unplugged leaks at BMW have it that the light, sporty Beemer is set for a European release in mid-September. If the debut comes off on schedule, the talk behind closed doors at BMW North America is that the bike could be ready for U.S. distribution within nine months from *now.*

• Here's a tidbit of news that should have the power-brokers straightening up in their chairs: In what seems definitely more than idle chit-chat, an insider at Yamaha who dropped his guard for just one second also dropped the hint that "interesting things are in store for the V-Max." How interesting do FZ750-style five-valve-per-cylinder heads sound to you?

• And here's a small follow-up to last month's wild talk about a Ninja 1000 in the offing. If you can't quite recall it, try this to jog your memory: 151 mph and 10.3 seconds were the figures that accompanied the item. Since then, some new information has surfaced. Although nothing's certain yet, sources inside are talking about a motorcycle far closer to the 600R Ninja than the 900, in terms of appearance and physical size. Or so we're told.

• People who really ought to know by now that their offices are bugged are suggesting that a resurgence of one-lungers is in the works, and could hit U.S. dealerships within the year. First, there's the XBR500 Honda, with twin-pipe exhaust, single carburetor and a Radial Four-Valve Combustion Chamber (RFVC) motor with gear-driven counterbalancer; the bike is already a production model for Europe. Then there's Yamaha's SRX600, a prototype of which is being tested right now in Japan. Sources close to the project speak of a machine with a 329-pound dry weight and 48-plus horsepower at 6500 rpm. Those who've seen this new-wave replacement for the discontinued SR500 report it has an oil cooler, remote-reservoir shocks, box-section swingarm and an 18-inch front wheel. What's more, Yamaha has plans for a 400cc version, as well.



Prototype Yamaha SRX600

Not a trace of British single here.

And now, we're told, yet another new thumper might very well be on the way, in the form of a street-only version of Suzuki's DR600. That bit of gossip coincides with reports that Suzuki shortly will release a new, low-cost sportbike, at least for the European market. With the lukewarm reception street Singles have had in the United States, there's no guarantee that even one of this trio will find its way to American tarmac, but you never know; this could be the start of thumping big.

• Things are so lively at the gossip factory that even Hesketh is being passed around the conversation pits. A fairly firm story currently circulating is that the resurrection of Hesketh (see Hard Cash, page 34), courtesy of Mocheck Martin, will give rise to a new, Mk2 version of the ill-fated V1000, one with a lighter, more-powerful engine and a totally new Martin chassis. The rest of the story is that the revitalized Hesketh operation is being assembled with a sharp eye toward the export market.

• On a somewhat more restrained note, the current talk about the U.S.-bound GSX-R750 Suzuki is that it will be significantly detuned from the Euro-spec version. We've heard the frame will be mild steel instead of aluminum, the suspension will come tuned more for ride comfort than for sport, the riding position will be retailored to provide for a more upright posture, and that engine performance could be a mere shadow of the Eurobike's. The same source allows as how the U.S. version will have four CV carbs, while GSX-Rs for the rest of the world currently sport Mikuni rectangular-slide/needle mixers. As a final blow, if our source has the story straight, there's a very real possibility the U.S.-spec version will be a 700—not a 750.

• Last month, we told you about reports that Bimota would be building aftermarket engine tuning parts for Ducati. This month, it seems there's a little more to the story. Our man under the Cinzano umbrellas reports Bimota has designed and built a prototype single-shock Ducati-powered bike, slated to be called the Bimota/Ducati F-1, with 16-inch wheels and an aluminum rear subframe. And, of course, the Bimota engine hop-ups are said to be part of the package. That is, if there *is* a package to be part of. Other sources close to the deal say the bike might never see the light of day, a casualty of Cagiva's purchase of Ducati VM and Ducati Meccanica (Hard Cash, July 1985). You'll find more, as it develops, in this column.

• And in a final bit of Italian dressing to the Rumors section, there's talk that Cagiva's new 90 degree vee-four race motor will herald in an era of vee-four technology for the firm—

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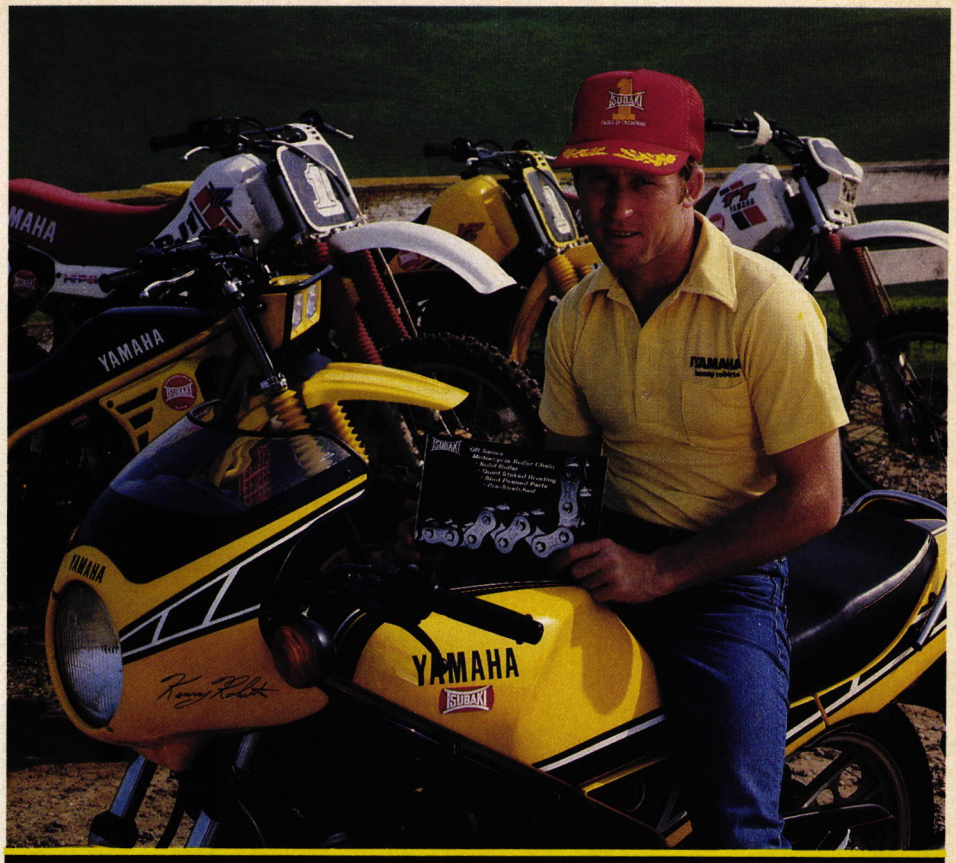

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one that definitely *won't* be confined to racebikes. But don't hold your breath to see if this one pans out; the story is that this rumor won't bear fruit for at least 18 months.

APART FROM THE CROWD

• Englishman Charles Batham—and his passenger Veronique Piales—rode their way into the Guinness Book of Records recently, after they pried themselves off their trailer-equipped Honda Gold Wing in Sydney, Australia. The pair had traveled more than 251,000 miles with the 1.3-ton rig, crossing 93 international borders, and using a total of 61 tires (for both bike and trailer) and 13 motorcycle batteries. All in all, the trip was nothing short of, well, record-setting. What makes the event even more amazing is that Batham reportedly hadn't even *ridden* a motorcycle before he started out to set the record.

• Don't Touch That Dial. A new television series is being pitched to British TV. It's called "Bikers," and it's built around a ficticious London-based messenger service. Although bike-riding actors will star in the series, real-life dispatch riders also will appear in each episode as extras. U.S. television viewers, on the other hand, traditionally have had the choice of watching scruffy bad guys on choppers or clean-cut good guys on "rocket-powered" devices that can jump over cars, and bear little resemblance to real bikes. Over There, it seems, the television audience is treated to something closer to reality—at least as far as motorcycles are concerned.

• File this under The Name Game. The engine for the 900 Phoenix (an appropriate moniker for the reborn Triumph) reportedly is called the Diana, after—that's right—Lady Di. Reports still are unconfirmed, however, as to whether or not the new engine's name will guarantee the Phoenix's debut extensive coverage in grocery store tabloids.

• While you're figuring that, try this: One of the newest rages in Japan is a blast from the past—girder forks. Well, mock girders, anyway. The units are designed and built by a former Honda MX frame designer, and are being marketed under the name "Girdaulics." The forks employ separate hydraulic dampers, and are being sold as dress-up parts for modern singles, as well as for replicas of classic bikes.

• It's a little-known fact that Harley-Davidson has held government contracts for years. Not for motorcycles, however, but for target bomb casings. This year, for instance, Harley's York, Pennsylvania, plant will produce approximately 110,000 such casings, worth more than $19 million. And as one Harley spokesman said, "There's . . . definitely a payoff for motorcyclists, since our motorcycles are manufactured using many of the same principles and techniques (as in the manufacture of the casings)." So, should your Electra Glide or Sportster show a tendency toward target fixation, you'll know why.

• You've no doubt heard of the more famous motorcycle groups—the Banditos, the Hell's Angels and the like. But there's a new gang in town, the likes of which have never hit the road before. It's the Bureaucratic Bikers, a club open to riders who work in any level of government. The Yakima, Washington-based group has as its emblem a scrap of red tape flapping in the breeze—but that's about *all* the organization has. There are no bylaws, no officers, and nothing resembling any kind of bureaucracy. According to club founder Al Brown, "We don't want too much organization. . . . Red tape can kill."

• If even the miniscule amount of organization of the Bureaucratic Bikers sounds like too much for you, there's always the Amateur Radio Motorcycle Club Net. This is one motorcycle club with no dues, no decals, no membership cards, not even a clubhouse. The group is comprised of riders with CB and two-meter VHF radio sets operated from their bikes, and at this point there are more than 600 members. The group "meets" every Thursday night at 3888 kHz during standard time, and 7237.5 kHz during daylight-saving time. Information on the Net can be had by sending a SASE to Gary McDuffie, Route 1, Box 464, Bayard, Nebraska 69334. Over and out.

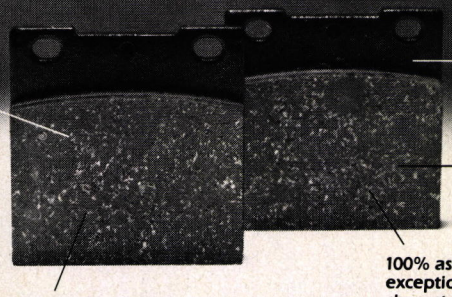
AFTER THE FACT

• In last month's Guide Lines, you read about the British motorcycle race promoter who desperately wanted the most vocal crowds. In fact, he wanted to get into the Guinness Book of Records on the basis of sheer volume. He gathered a group of notorious loudmouths to try out for the men's and women's individual categories, and called the event—which coincided with a race—the Bigmouth Trophy. There's no word yet on whether or not the cheering section was loud enough to establish a record, but you can bet no amateur noisemakers carried off the gold; records for individual male and female categories are, respectively, 111.9 and 120 decibels. In light of those ear-shattering volume levels, the real question wasn't whether the records would fall, it was whether or not any of the racers would be able to hear their engines running.

• And in another follow-up, July issue's Hard Cash column had an item about a $3 million program to push motorcycling in Great Britain. The program has developed a bit since last month. As part of the plan, advertisements in support of motorcycling will be run in newspapers, magazines and on television, as well as being shown in movie theaters playing a new James Bond film. When 007 himself starts pushing motorcycling, you can bet the program is serious.

• There was something missing in Motomart in the June 1985 issue: the street address for Progressive Suspension. The complete address is: Progressive Suspension, Dept. CG, 15661 Producers Lane, Unit N, Huntington Beach, California 90808. CYCLE GUIDE regrets the error. •

SBS PADS GIVE MOTORCYCLES AN EVEN BRAKE


Front wheel pads use high friction material.
Steel backing plates are shot blasted and lacquer coated to prevent corrosion.
Rear wheel pads are low friction to provide straight even braking.
100% asbestos free pads have exceptional heat dissipation characteristics and will not swell when wet.
Friction materials are specifically formulated for motorcycles.

Hot, cold, wet or dry . . . SBS all-weather disc brake pads deliver maximum braking performance for street/dirt motorcycles and ATV's. SBS pads have been racetrack tested and proven worldwide. Give your bike an even brake—Install a set today.

Contact Barnett Tool & Engineering for the largest selection of SBS pads available. Suggested retail for a set of 2 pads start at $13.10.

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Since 1949
Quality-Service-Experience
P.O. Box 2826, Santa Fe Springs
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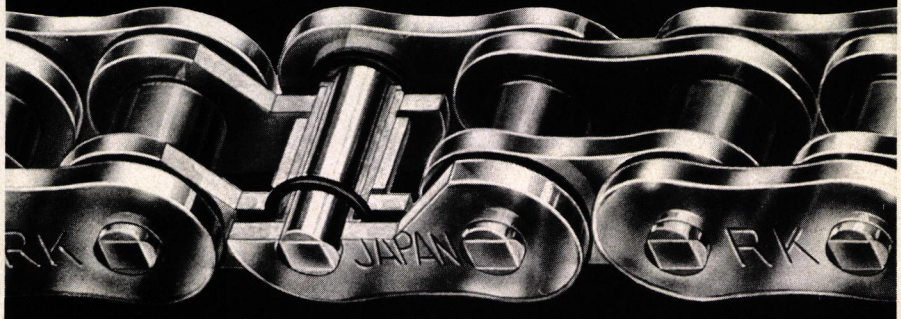
RK 20,000 MILE "O-RING" WARRANTY



"Legendary Strength and Durability"

Top Pros and Factory Teams like Freddie Spencer, Team Honda Racing, Team Yamaha and others don't really need the RK CHAIN 20,000 mile warranty, but they know why we can offer it.

RK builds each chain as if our reputation and theirs depended on it. That's why with every RK O-RING CHAIN you get a no-hassle 20,000 mile limited warranty for street use, or a 5,000 mile or one year warranty for off-road use.

Motorcycle RK Chain
Takasago Chain Co. Ltd.

"World Class Chain for World Class Riders"

Send $10 to FTM & ASSOCIATES, 550 West Regent Street, Unit 301, Inglewood, CA 90301 for your RK Freddie Spencer T-Shirt & Racing Patch plus an RK mail-order catalog.

Here's a multiple choice question: Do you want styling, power, or handling? If you picked all of the above, we've got the answer: The Nighthawk™ S.

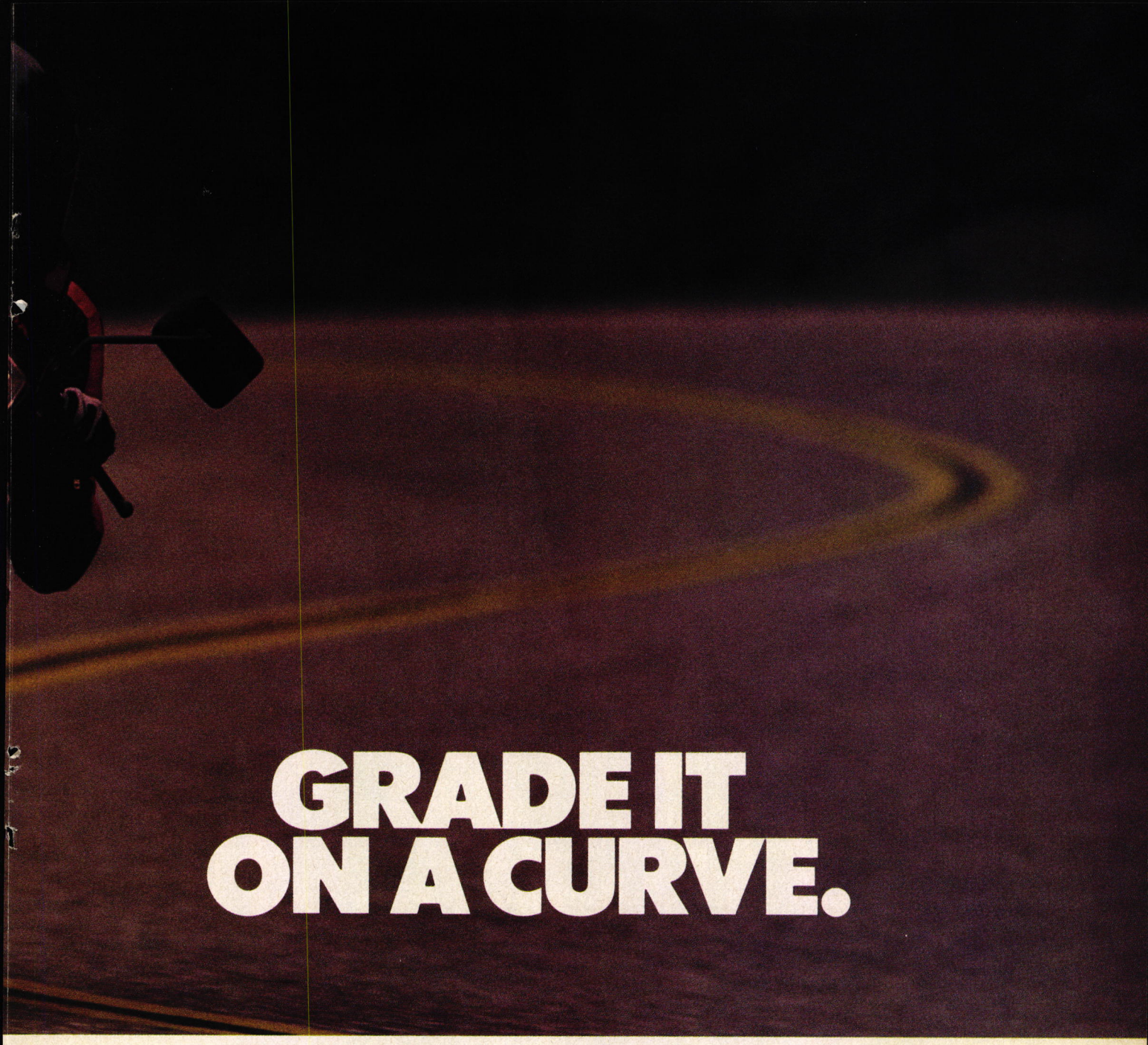
It gets a high rating for functional styling: Quarter fairing. Comcast™ wheels. And 4-into-2 black chrome racing exhaust.

Flick the throttle and you'll learn about power. The advanced four-cylinder engine with Hydraulic Valve Adjusters pumps out 80† horsepower, yet stays cool with a frame-integrated oil cooler.

And it could teach a course

The Nighthawk S has a 12-month unlimited mileage warranty. See your local Honda dealer for complete details. Specifications and availability subject to change without notice. †SAE net

RIDE LIKE A PRO. That means using your head. And riding safely. Always wear a helmet and eye protection. Read your owner's manual carefully. Maintain your machine in safe running condition. Follow the rules of the road and always use common sense. Never drink and ride. Ride at a safe speed



GRADE IT ON A CURVE.

on handling. With its 16-inch front wheel, TRAC™ anti-dive and powerful twin-piston caliper front disc brakes, the Nighthawk S pulls straight A's on any curvy road.

The Nighthawk S.

The answer to all your questions about sport riding.

HONDA MOTORCYCLES

FOLLOW THE LEADER

taken at the crankshaft. © 1985 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. (4/85) For a free brochure, see your Honda dealer. Or write: American Honda, Dept. 967, Box 7055, N. Hollywood, CA 91609-7055.

and obey the basic speed law. Slow down before you enter a turn. Give yourself plenty of room when passing cars. Don't make any unsafe modifications. If you're riding a new or unfamiliar machine, take it extra easy. And be nice enough to acknowledge when you are given the right-of-way. Pros know that doing the right things makes riding a lot safer. And more fun.

ROAD TEST:

Suzuki GV1400GD Cavalcade LX

A clean slate for the closet engineer.

There's no black art or deep, dark secrets to designing a full-dress, no-holds-barred touring bike. In fact, a manufacturer need only open its eyes and ears to the highly vocal touring community for direction. Because inside every long-haul artist is a closet engineer—a guy who knows exactly what he wants for the touring rig of his dreams. And most of those latent designers are likely to agree on two things: Honda's Gold Wing Aspencade has the best-thought-out overall touring package, while Yamaha's Venture, on the other hand, has the most powerful engine.

Armed with that information, Suzuki's engineers whipped out their drawing boards to build their own big rig. This time, however, they armed themselves with more than calculators and drafting machines; they brought along a Honda GL1200 Aspencade and a Yamaha Venture Royale. Then they selected the best attributes from each of those two role models—the Aspencade's fairing and luggage, and the Yamaha's mighty vee-four motor—and incorporated their own versions of those pieces into an all-new chassis. It's the kind of pick-and-choose designing most touring riders would like to have done themselves. And the result is the GV1400GD Cavalcade LX, Suzuki's first purpose-built touring bike.

In most respects, that same design philosophy places the Cavalcade neatly between the Yamaha and Honda, especially in regard to the motor. Suzuki's engineers turned to the GV1200GL Madura's

Continued

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

BY MARC COOK

Cardinal

vee-four for the basis of the Cavalcade's 1360cc powerplant, and although they targeted the Venture in terms of sheer performance, their salvo missed the mark. Admittedly, running the Cavalcade through the quarter-mile shows it's almost as quick as the Venture—only 0.12 seconds off the pace—and 0.27 seconds ahead of the Aspencade. Even so, the Suzuki doesn't *feel* as fast as the big Yamaha, and up to about 2000 rpm the carbs hinder the GV's power, with an off-idle hesitation and poor throttle response. Above 2000 rpm the carburetion improves and lets the Cavalcade's motor thunder out an impressive midrange surge of power. Yet that rush of acceleration only lasts until 5000 rpm, whereupon the Suzuki's power flattens out, stopping its charge as the rev limiter kicks in 500 rpm past the 7000-rpm redline.

Those power characteristics illustrate how much was changed to transform the high-revving, high-horsepower GV1200GL Madura engine into a touring powerplant. To better suit the 806-pound Cavalcade, the motor's displacement grew from 1166cc to a whopping 1360cc—the largest engine in the touring class. The increase was aimed primarily at increasing low-end power, and Suzuki complemented the displacement boost with a comprehensive list of tuning changes. For starters, the compression ratio dropped one full point to 9.5:1, and the quartet of Mikuni downdraft carburetors are now 3mm smaller at 33mm. And according to Suzuki's dyno chart, those changes result in an engine that has greater torque at 2200 rpm than the 1200 has at its *peak*. Yet despite Suzuki's claims, the GV's low-speed carburetion glitches keep it from feeling especially strong until the revs pass 2000 rpm.

Suzuki's work on the Madura-based motor didn't stop at the top end, though. The GV1400 uses a 180 degree crank instead of the Madura's 360 degree design because, Suzuki claims, the 180 configuration offers better low-end power and less vibration. Also, the 1200 Madura's six-speed gearbox got tossed in favor of a five-speed unit with taller (lower numerically) ratios for second through fifth gears. The Cavalcade's transmission doesn't shift nearly as well as the Madura's, however, because of the touring rig's sloppy shift linkage and the flexy rubber-mounted footpegs. Further down the powertrain, the transmission-to-driveshaft and final drive ratios also were raised (lowered numerically), resulting in taller overall gearing compared to the Madura. To better cope with the new gearing and increased low-rpm power, the clutch has two more plates, and the final-drive cush mechanism has moved from the driveshaft to inside the secondary drive unit.

Aside from those changes, the Cavalcade's engine remains remarkably similar to the GV1200GL Madura's. Both have their cylinder banks set 82 degrees apart and operate their 16 valves through rocker arms fitted with hydraulic lash adjusters. The Cavalcade also retains the Madura's liquid-cooling, hydraulic clutch, rubber engine mounts and shaft drive.

Yet while Suzuki drew freely from the Madura to build the Cavalcade's powerplant, the chassis, on the other hand, started from a clean sheet of paper. In many ways, though, the Suzuki's chassis resembles the Honda's: Both bikes use dual air-assist shocks, they share the same wheel and tire sizes, and both carry a 5.8-gallon fuel tank under the seat. But Suzuki wanted the Cavalcade to be more stable than the Wing, and to that end endowed the bike with a steamer-class 66.0-inch wheelbase—the longest in its class and 2.5 inches longer than the Aspencade's.

With the bike's tape-stretching wheelbase in mind, you might think the Suzuki would steer like a Peterbilt. That's certainly not the case, but the bike *does* respond slowly, despite having a light feel to its steering. On the highway that translates into uncanny stability and unusually good resistance to crosswinds for a large touring bike. The Suzuki does tend to follow rain grooves, but otherwise feels downright unflappable over most types of pavement.

That stability doesn't make the Suzuki a handful in town, though; the steering effort remains light and the bike never feels especially top-heavy. And if you should take the Cavalcade out of the city, onto some snaky canyon roads, you'll notice the bike feels reasonably light on its feet, considering its size. You can hustle the Suzuki along at a brisk pace through gentle, sweeping curves, but its tendency to ground solid-mounted parts—before the pegs touch down—deters a rider from taking full advantage of the Cavalcade's potential.

Conversely, it's much easier to use the GV's brakes to their full potential. Suzuki chose not to fit a unified braking system (as employed on Honda's Aspencade and Yamaha's Venture, where the brake pedal operates one front caliper and the rear caliper), instead opting for a conventional setup. And even without that bit of touring-related hardware, the Suzuki's binders

work remarkably well, offering progressive stopping power and good feedback. That's especially true of the front brake; with minimal lever effort, you can lock the front wheel easily, yet controllably.

Another touring-related feature lacking on the Cavalcade is full suspension adjustability. For example, the Kayaba fork offers no adjustments at all, relying instead on its progressive springs to compensate for varying loads. In fact, the Cavalcade's only provision for suspension adjustment is its computerized autolevel system. Pushing a button in the fairing activates the system any time the ignition is on, the bike is in neutral and both stands are up. Then, a sensor mounted between the frame and the swingarm measures the amount of suspension sack, and an on-board compressor adjusts the shocks' air pressure to achieve a predetermined ride height. The one-button approach does simplify the system greatly, but it also prevents any convenient setting of the suspension independent of the preset.

Yet even with that limitation, the Suzuki's suspension serves up a surprisingly cushy ride. Both ends seem well matched for a 190-pound rider and no load, and the suspension responds fluidly

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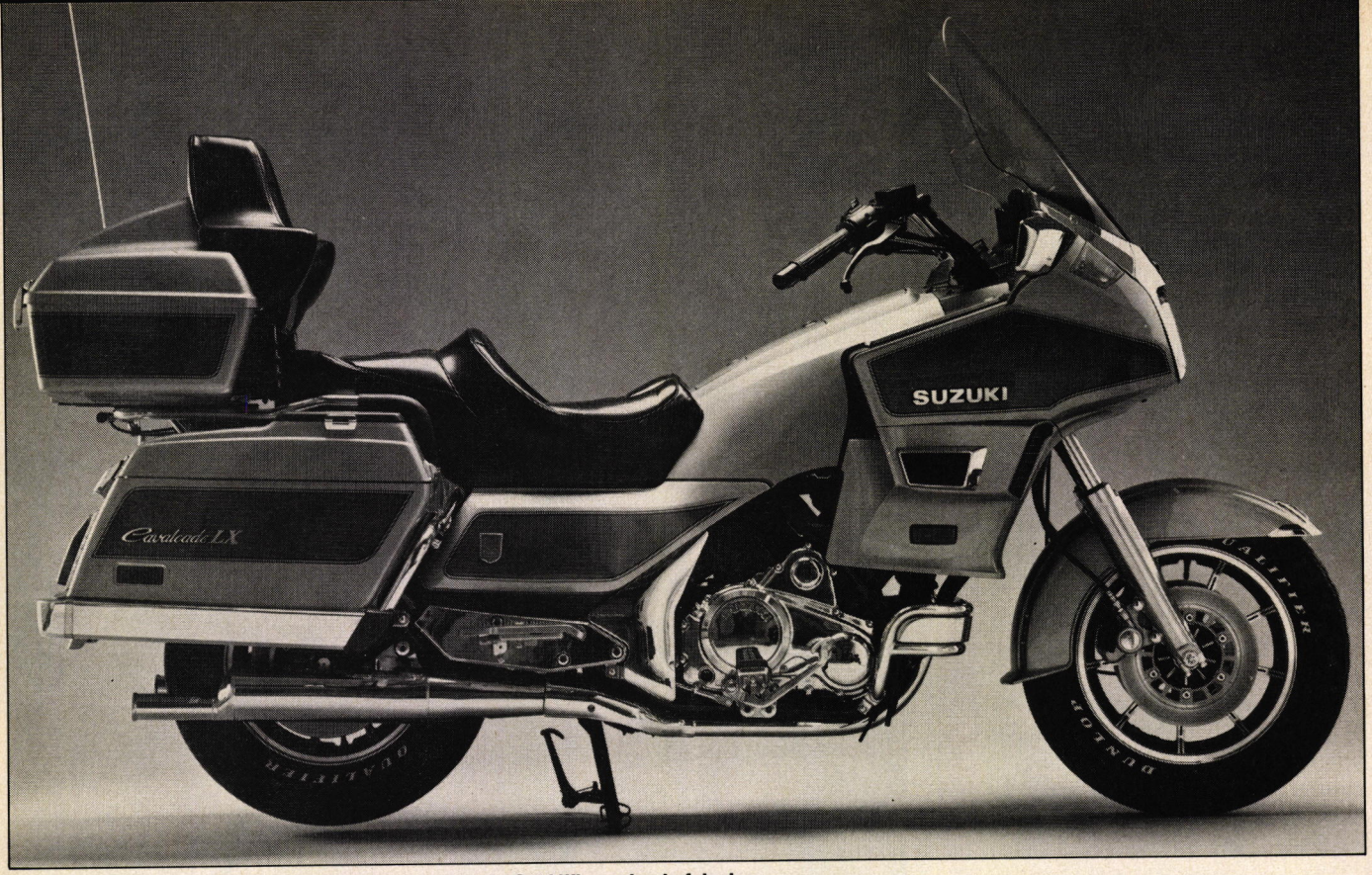


Cavalcade's coachwork comes directly from the Honda Gold Wing school of design

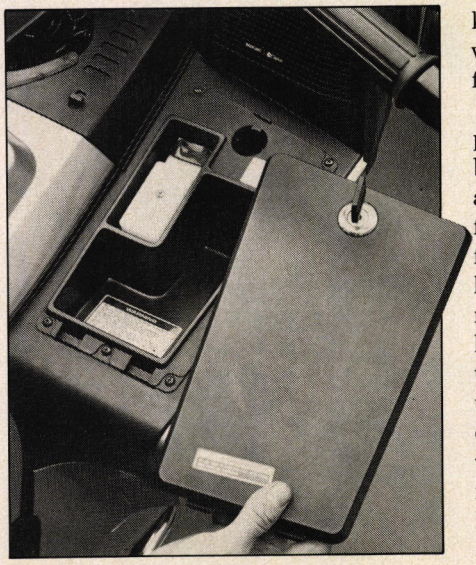
Graduating with an "A" in luggage capacity and a "D" in heat control.

to all but the harshest bumps. But load the bike to the gunwales—with the auto-level adjusted—and you'll notice a slight harshness at the rear over expansion joints, although not to an annoying degree. The fork remains remarkably supple, however, even with the bike positively brimming with cargo.

The Cavalcade's luggage gives you plenty of capacity to test the bike's GVWR, too. Although the non-detachable bags (with high-quality soft liners) bear a strong resemblance to the Aspencade's, they're not quite up to the GL's standards: The latches are misaligned and often won't latch without some fiddling. Plus, aside from the main storage, the only small-item cubbyholes are the cold-drink containers in the saddlebag lids and the tiny locking pockets in the fairing—a far cry from the Honda's offerings.

Likewise, the Cavalcade's fairing needs more refinement to bring it up to the Aspencade's standards. Above 60 mph, the ABS plastic fairing can't keep wind from buffeting the rider's helmet or pushing him from the back. Below that speed, though, the fairing works reasonably well, giving the rider a sizable still-air pocket. To get that level of upper-body protection, the Suzuki uses a tall, wide windscreen, which forces shorter riders to look through it. And because of the screen's optical imperfections, looking through it becomes tiring, especially in the rain or at night.

Windscreen imperfections are the least of the fairing's shortcomings, however. Because the waves of heat rolling off the vee-four motor would fairly cook the rider in hotter climates, Suzuki didn't fit lowers to the fairing. But that solution simply doesn't work: In hot weather, there's enough heat pouring off the rear cylinders to make you wonder if someone fitted a couple of space heaters in the engine bay. Also, the GV's motor tends to run warm in stop-and-go traffic, exacerbating the problem.



Locking cover hides miniscule storage

A glovebox in the truest sense.

The picture doesn't brighten appreciably in cooler climates, either. When the mercury drops, there's simply not enough engine heat to take the chill off. Consequently, Suzuki equipped the Cavalcade with two tiny vents located under the lower part of the fairing, which are intended to direct warm air onto the rider. But their meager airflow doesn't compensate for a lack of leg protection, and in the rain you'll really notice the lack of lowers. That's because the lower half of the fairing scoops rain up onto the rider's knees, which, combined with the lack of wind protection, makes for an uncomfortable ride in inclement weather.

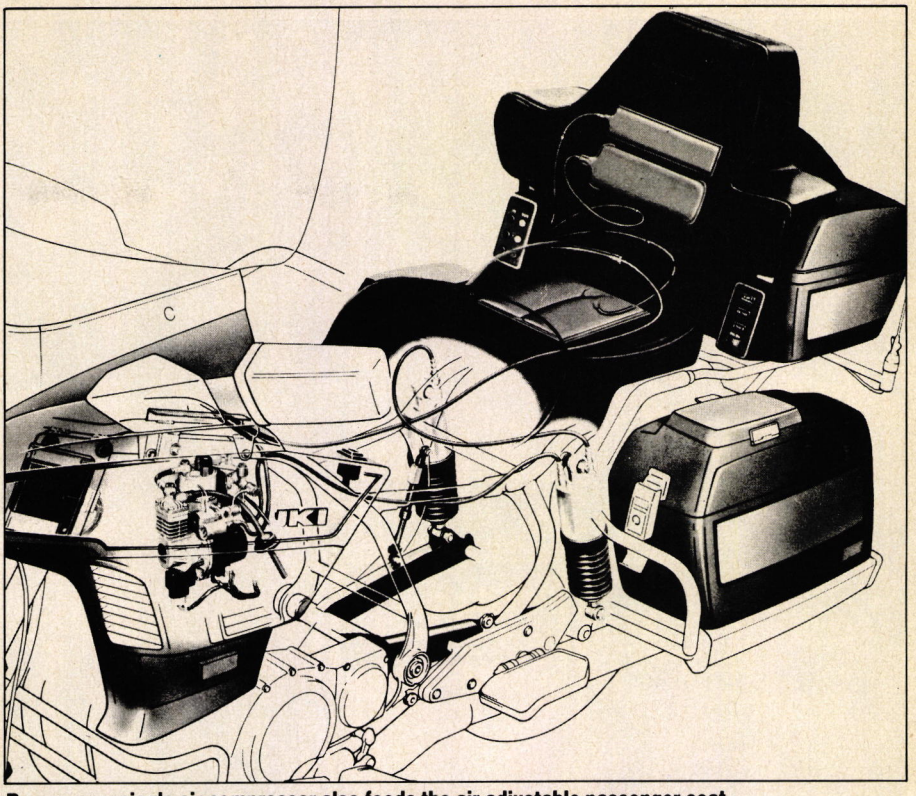
Unlike the fairing, though, you can appreciate the Cavalcade's saddle *any* time, because it's plush and near-perfect for all-day trips. Plus, the rubber-mounted footpegs help place the rider in a comfortable, natural riding position. There's little vibration coming from the rubber-mounted engine, too; a slight amount of low-frequency tingle is all that gets through to the rider. Only the handlebar undermines the Cavalcade's comfort quotient, by forcing the rider to lean forward slightly. While that position feels fine for short jaunts, it compromises long-distance comfort by straining his arms and shoulders.

As up-to-date as the pilot's accommodations are, they pale when compared to

the passenger-oriented features. Suzuki went all-out in its efforts to coddle the co-pilot, and included a pneumatically adjustable passenger seat. Three small air bladders, two in the seat back and one in the bottom, inflate via a control panel mounted just below the passenger's right-side armrest. In addition, the passenger's footboards can be angled to one of two positions, together or independently, by means of a remote lever. Plus, the travel trunk adjusts fore-and-aft to any of four positions. Overall, those features give the Cavalcade's passenger unprecedented options and virtually unparalleled comfort.

And for the rider, Suzuki included another feature, one that's becoming commonplace on high-rolling touring rigs: computerized cruise control. Three non-illuminated buttons on the right switch cluster control power, set and resume functions; holding down the resume button makes the bike accelerate, and holding the set button decelerates the bike. The system functions any time the bike's in top gear between 35 and 85 mph, and on the Superslab, the device is superb: There's no lag as it kicks in, and the unit holds the bike within 2 mph of its set speed even in a 40-mph headwind.

Rounding out the electronics package is a Clarion AM/FM cassette stereo. Suzuki mounted the self-contained unit in the dummy tank, providing a short, convenient reach to all the controls. In use, the auto-reverse tape player works flawlessly, offering secure transport and good sound quality, and the amplifier provides enough power to overcome wind noise without excessive distortion. But the stereo needs more development time, because the detented volume controls are difficult to use and need to be more linear in their response. Likewise, the auto-volume circuitry could be less progressive; it provides a radical volume increase as road speed increases, making it difficult to find a setting that works well on the highway *and* in town.



Rear suspension's air compressor also feeds the air-adjustable passenger seat

But it's far more than just a high-tech whoopie cushion.

Still, it's not the stereo's shortcomings that nibble away at your peace of mind on the long haul. Instead, it's the soft carburetion, excessive heat, rippled screen and clunky latches that do so, and they keep the Cavalcade off the Aspencade's level of near perfection. And those are misfires that shouldn't show up on a motorcycle designed with its role models an arm's length away from the drawing boards. On the other hand, the Suzuki is a magnificent first effort, albeit one that overlooked some of the pilot's comfort in favor of pampering the passenger like no other touring bike does. In fact, the Cavalcade suffers no crippling omissions, and has the fundamentals covered, with excellent straight-line stability, good suspension, strong brakes and stable handling. That the bike is not in the same league as the Honda just underscores the fact that copying is no guarantee of success. Now it's up to Suzuki—or the closet engineers—to bring the Cavalcade up to the impressively high standards of its class.•

Nits:

- Fuel gauge is inaccurate and non-linear.
- Clutch pull is heavy.

Picks:

- Adjustable windscreen.
- Rider's footpegs adjust fore and aft.
- Hinged centerstand lever is easy to use.
- Remote radio frequency display reduces eyes-off-road time.
- High-quality toolkit is exceptionally complete, and includes a ratchet and a socket set.
- Remote headphone-volume and radio-tuning controls for passenger.

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Suzuki Cavalcade LX-'85	12.881/101.12	115	806	155
Honda Gold Wing Limited Edition-'85	13.346/98.36	113	810	134
Harley-Davidson FXRT-'85	14.180/90.36	92	640	126
Harley-Davidson FLTC-'84	14.603/88.75	107	774	152
Kawasaki Voyager-'84	13.346/97.61	116	882	142
Yamaha Venture Royale-'84	12.759/101.46	124	752	137

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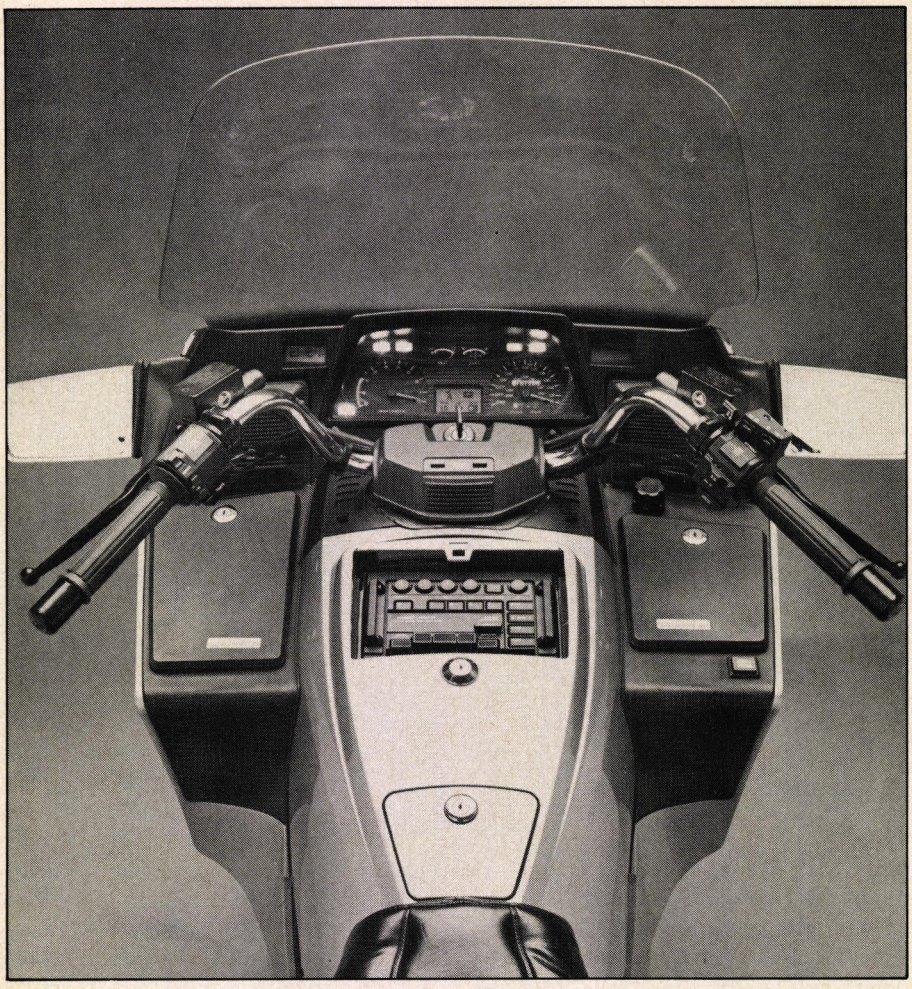
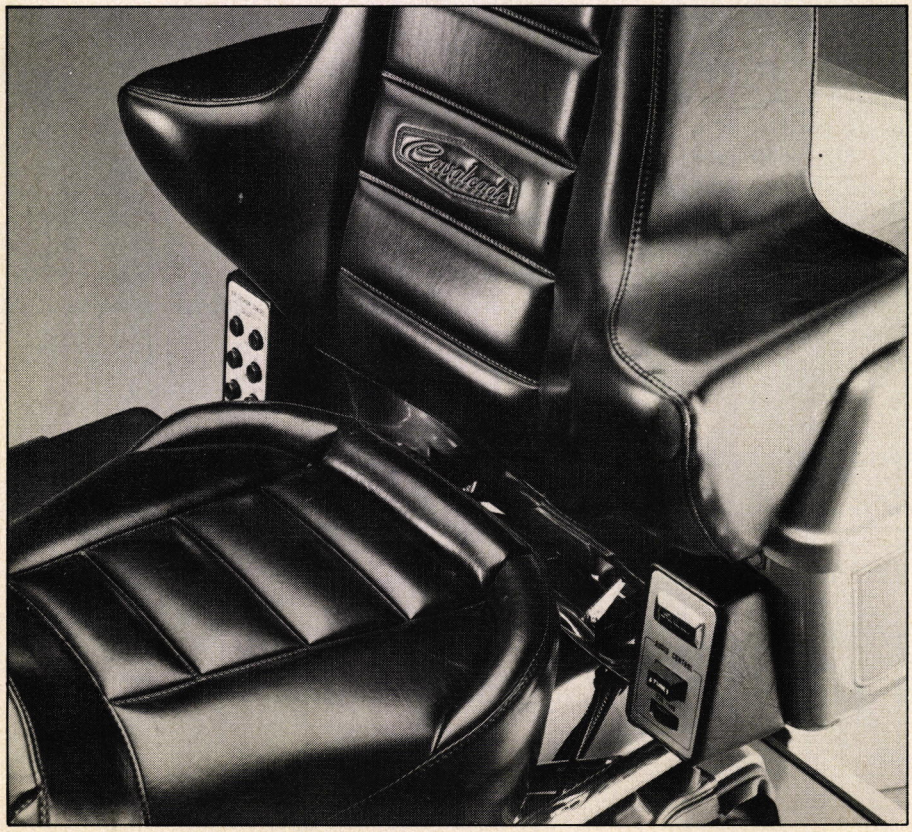


Uncluttered instruments and easy-access stereo highlight pilot's accommodations

But adjustments that would shame an easy chair put the passenger's comfort first.



Ride Review

• It had to happen sooner or later. Someone had to build the Universal Japanese Touring Bike. Don't get me wrong, now. I don't dislike the Cavalcade. It's just that by the time Suzuki introduced its first luxo-touring bike, the formula for building a successful tourer was cut and dried. About the only thing Suzuki's engineers had to do was look at a Gold Wing and a Venture, and try to combine the best of both into one bike.

And that's apparently all they did. Oh, there are the obligatory amusement modules scattered hither and yon about the bike, all right. But there's still nothing compelling enough about the Suzuki that would entice me to buy it instead of a Honda or a Yamaha. The Cavalcade might have a Gold Wing's styling and an engine like a Venture's, but it's also got all the charisma of white bread. —*Jerry Smith*

• First, we get a few things straight. I don't own jodhpurs, I look silly in jackboots and a peaked cap, and anyone who ever called me Jeeves—as in, "Home, Jeeves"—never lived to tell the tale.

Second, I'm not so jaded that a bike has to refashion technology in order to pass muster, so it doesn't faze me that the Cavalcade is a me-too effort. But I do require that a motorcycle be built for the *rider,* and this one isn't. Oh, my passenger admired the quick-adjust footboards and backrest, and of course the push-button whoopie cushion. And I endured the hellish engine heat, the too-tall rippled windscreen and the too-long reach to the bars. No, the Cavalcade exists for the passenger's pleasure—not the rider's. I've got a motorcycle license, not a chauffeur's license, and, thanks all the same, that's just how I'd like to keep it. —*Larry Works*

• How is that Suzuki copied all the trivial parts of the Gold Wing—the fairing, saddlebags and trunk—and missed the part that really counts—the flat-four engine layout? To me, that seems to be the most important aspect of the Gold Wing's success, though not for the reasons espoused in Honda's sales brochures.

Oh, a flat-four is probably inherently smoother than most vee-fours, but there's nothing wrong with the Suzuki's offbeat cadence. And the Cavalcade's motor heats up its rider more than the Wing's, though even that's not sufficient to rule out the vee-four. No, the real reason the Suzuki's vee comes up short when compared to the Wing's doppleboxermotor is the way you can clip down the freeway, with your heels propped up on the GL's heads. And somehow all the horsepower in the world won't make up for that. —*Jim Miller*

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Suzuki GV1400GD Cavalcade LX — touring

IMPORTER: U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp., 3251 E. Imperial Highway, Brea, California 92621

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $7999

ENGINE

Type . . . . . liquid-cooled four-stroke 82 degree tandem vee-four
Valve arrangement . . . . . double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke . . . . . 81.0mm x 66.0mm
Displacement 1360.4cc
Compression ratio 9.5:1
Engine redline . . . . . 7000 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . four 33mm Mikuni constant-vacuum
Air filter . . . . . disposable paper element
Lubrication . . . . . wet sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 500-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 20-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . helical gears; 1.756:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Transmission-to-driveshaft drive . . . . . spiral-bevel gears; 1.000:1 ratio
Driveshaft-to-rear-wheel drive . . . . . spiral-bevel gears; 2.667:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.750	12.878	5.77
II	1.684	7.887	9.42
III	1.250	5.854	12.69
IV	1.000	4.683	15.87
V	0.852	3.989	18.63

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Kayaba, 41mm stanchion tube diameter/ 5.3 in. (134mm)
Rear . . . . . dual Kayaba air-spring shocks/ 4.2 in. (107mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . dual double-action hydraulic calipers, 10.7-in. (272mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . double-action hydraulic caliper, 11.6-in. (294mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front . . . . . 130/90-16 67H Dunlop Qualifier F11A tubeless
Rear . . . . . 150/90-15 74H Dunlop Qualifier K925 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

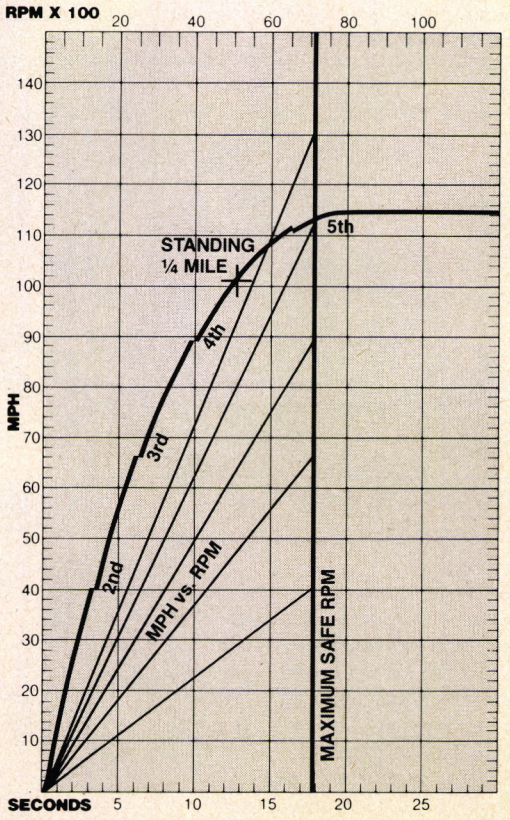
Weight . . . . . 806 lbs. (365.6kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 43.4% front, 56.6% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 1300 lbs. (590kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 457 lbs. (208kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 66.0 in. (1677mm)
Seat height . . . . . 31.5 in. (801mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 31.5 in. (800mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 11.5 in. (293mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . 5.2 in. (133mm), at exhaust pipes
Steering head angle . . . . . 29.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 4.69 in. (119mm)
Frame . . . . . tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 3.4 qt. (3.2l)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 5.8 gal. (22.0l), no reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge, fuel gauge, LCD digital clock, LCD radio frequency readout, LCD gear position indicator

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 24 to 49 mpg (10 to 21 km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 37 mpg (16 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 139 to 284 miles (224 to 457km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . . . no reserve
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 30 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 53 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 12.881 sec., 101.21 mph (163 kph)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 115 mph (185 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 34 ft. (10.4m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 155 ft. (47.2m)

WARRANTY: 12 months, unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: two-tone-brown; two-tone gold



All weight and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

ROAD TEST:

Kawasaki 900 Ninja

The king of flinty-eyed road warriors.

• Last year, Kawasaki's 900 Ninja kicked and punched its way through the sporting literbike class, leaving most of its competition stunned and gasping for breath. And while the Ninja's extreme sport-oriented bias made it *the* bike for like-minded riders, that same backroad poise left little room for such niceties as long-distance comfort or in-town civility.

Still, a lack of versatility couldn't diminish the bike's appeal, which is precisely why the 1985 Ninja comes from Kawasaki's Lincoln, Nebraska, plant with little more than fine tuning and new paint. Among those changes, the Ninja's engine now spins its gear-driven alternator slightly faster to increase its low-rpm output, and the Keihin semi-flat-slide carbs now are fitted with modified spray bars to improve low-rpm throttle response.

Aside from those alterations, though, the Ninja's 908cc inline-four powerplant remains unchanged from 1984. Yet despite the similarity to last year's engine, our '85 test bike presents much different manners from those of the pilot-production model we tested last year. In addition to its 6-mph higher top speed, the '85's engine is slightly torquier, and its counterbalancer seems more effective at quelling vibration from idle to about 6500 rpm, with only a slight amount of buzzing coming through the grips and pegs. Wind up the revs, though, and vibration increases noticeably.

And rpm is still the key to getting the best performance out of this Kawasaki. The Ninja makes its best power at high rpm, tearing ferociously out of corners when you keep the engine revving between 8000 rpm and its 10,500-rpm redline. The bike's carburetion is near perfect throughout the rev-range, too, with crisp throttle response that gives the Ninja an agreeable nature, both on the backroads and in town.

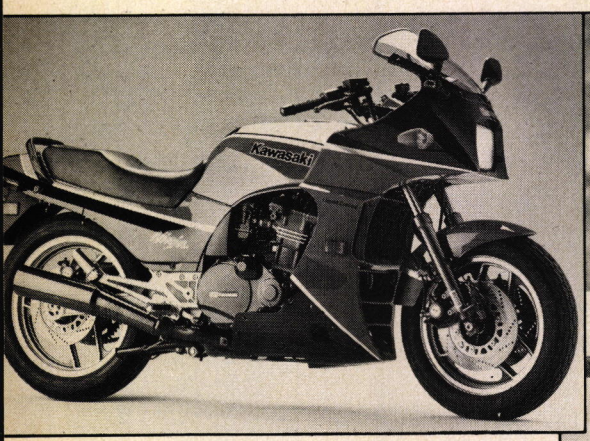
This year, the suspension has become more agreeable, as well, offering better compliance and a smoother freeway ride. Though unchanged from 1984 specs, both ends of our '85 Ninja work significantly better on rough roads, without detracting from the bike's sporting prowess. With the air pressure set to 6 psi in the fork (5.7–7.1-psi range), 15 psi in the shock (7.1–21-psi range) and the shock's rebound damping set to No.4 (of four), the 900 displays a taut, well-controlled feel at speed. There's plenty of cornering clearance to work the excellent Dunlop tires clean out to their edges, too, although fast corner-work means grappling with the Ninja's heavy steering. The rider must use full concentration to get the most out of the bike, but it rewards those efforts with remarkable stability. In contrast, it takes little effort to extract full power from the bike's brakes: The front binders offer instant-on actuation, and power and feel that few other brakes can equal.

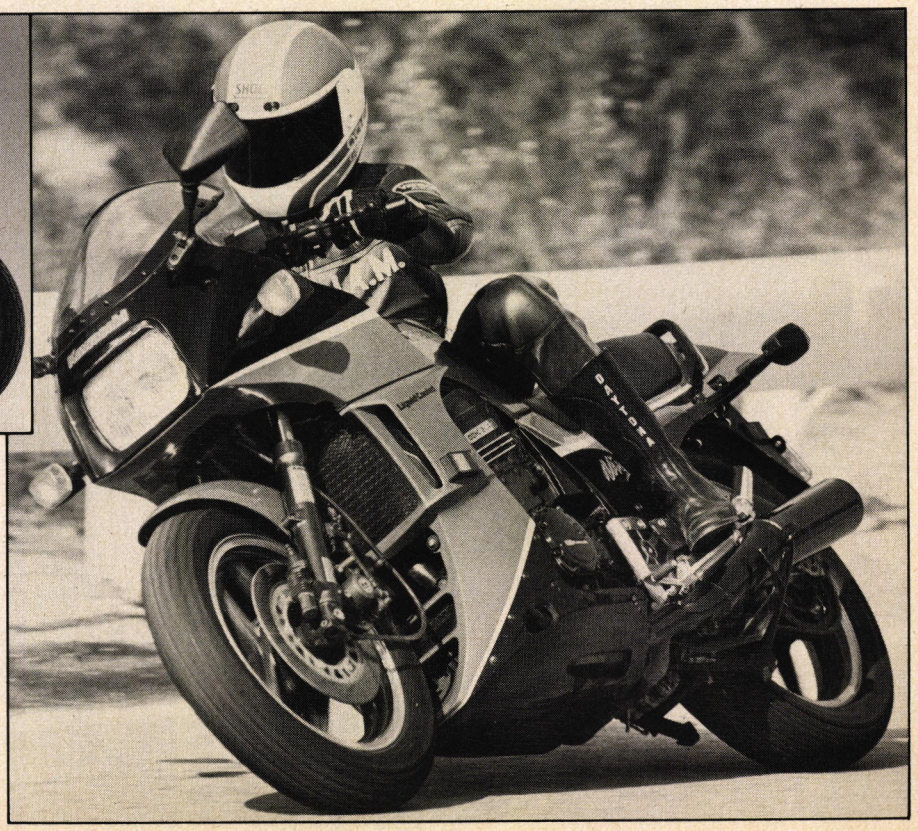
Indeed, the Ninja possesses a level of pure sporting ability that few other *motorcycles* can match. That kind of competence, together with the 900's eye-opening horsepower, is exactly what made the bike a runaway success in its first year. It's got the same uncompromised, clear-eyed sporting intent that strikes deep into the heart of every red-blooded canyon crazy. For those riders, the return of the Ninja means just one thing: Their favorite sportbike still possesses the killer instinct. —*Marc Cook*

KAWASAKI 900 NINJA

Importer: Kawasaki Motors Corp.
2009 E. Edinger Ave.
Santa Ana, California 92711

Category	street
Suggested retail price	$4599
Engine type	liquid-cooled four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	72.5mm x 55.0mm
Displacement	908.2cc
Compression ratio	11.0:1
Carburetion	four 34mm Keihin semi-flat-slide constant-vacuum
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Kayaba air spring, 38mm stanchion tube diameter, 3-position brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.2 in. (132mm)
Rear shock/wheel travel	Kayaba air-spring, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/ 4.8 in. (122mm)
Weight	535 lbs. (242.7kg)
Wheelbase	58.9 to 59.9 in. (1495 to 1521mm)
Seat height	30.9 in. (785mm)
Steering head angle	29.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.49 in. (114mm)
Best ¼-mile acceleration	11.175 sec., 123.79 mph (199 kph)
Top speed (observed)	151 mph (243kph)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	131 ft. (39.9m)
Fuel consumption	32 to 41 mpg (14 to 17 km/l)
Warranty	12 months, unlimited mileage
Available colors	red-and-black, silver-and-red





Ninja's stance betrays its sporting intent

For the cut-and-thrust of Racer Road.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Frey Daytona Silverstone GLS Boots

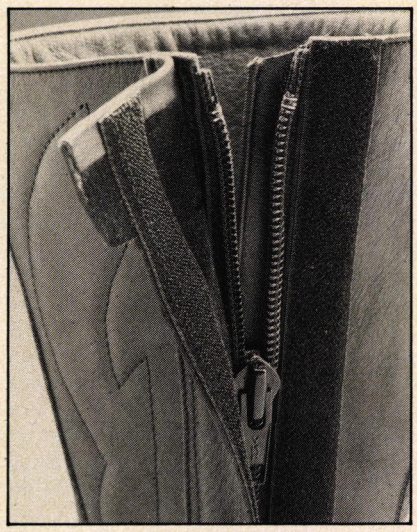
Winning you over, heart and sole.

• Almost everyone has a favorite piece of riding gear—an old jacket or a sweat-stained pair of gloves—that he's embarrassed to drag out, but can't quite throw away, either, because he knows he'll never find anything to replace it. In my case, that gear is a pair of boots sitting in the back of my closet after the shoe repair shop pronounced them DOA the last time I took them in. If you're like me, a pair of Frey Daytona Silverstone GLS Boots just might take the place of those loved ones.

They'll certainly look better than the old faithfuls, though you might think otherwise at first glance; the Silverstones have a distinctly busy look. Their dull-black, cowhide exterior features a double-layered shift pad across the toe, with an additional swatch of leather as reinforcement wrapped around the heel, and a horizontally ribbed, foam-padded panel runs across the back of the calf, topped by an elastic stretch panel. Furthering the Frey's patchwork look is the full-length zipper on the outer side of the boot, covered by a Velcro-secured storm flap. In addition, a stitched flourish and silver lettering accent the front of each boot, complementing their "assembled" appearance.

But the Silverstones' overriding feature is not their look; it's their function. For example, the ribbed panel on the calf allows the boots' shafts to flex easily, so the 15-inch-tall Freys aren't nearly as stiff as you might expect, even when new. From Day One, the Silverstones' flexibility provides exceptional control feel—and all-day comfort, walking or riding. And that flexibility— plus the full-length zippers—also makes slipping into them as easy as pulling on a pair of socks. Part of the boots' suppleness is due to the soft leather lining in the uppers, as well as the soft foam padding at the shin. Moreover, the elastic stretch panels at the top of the calves make it possible to wear the boots over your pant legs, even if you're wearing thick leather pants. All in all, those features add up to a pair of riding boots that feel like old friends an hour after you slide them on.

Best of all, though, they *stay* that way. Even after several months of daily use, including a couple of good soakings in the rain and the 40-weight piddling of an English Twin, the Silverstones still look new, with no scuffing, torn threads or frayed edges, and a minimum of wear on the rubber soles. If you're serious about replacing your old faithfuls, the Frey Daytona Silverstones can certainly follow in their footsteps. Personally, I'm considering having my old boots bronzed. *—Jim Miller*



Frey Daytona Silverstone GLS Boots
Importer: Motorace, P.O. Box 861, Dept. CG, Wilbraham, Massachusetts 01095.
Suggested retail price: $99.95
Available color: black only
Available sizes: Men's 5–14, Women's 4 ½–10; in ½-sizes

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 VIC HUBER

Soft uppers and elastic panels make the Silverstones instantly comfortable

While the padding and supple lining mean the comfort won't walk out on you.

ROAD TEST:

Honda VF700C Magna

The boulevard bandit matures.

• When Honda introduced the original Magna in 1982, motorcycling got its first look at a new category of bike, the performance custom. The Magna was aimed directly at the growing number of riders who wanted the flash of custom styling and the fury of sportbike performance in a single package.

But since that time, the custom market has fragmented into two camps. On one side are pure customs, vee-twin-powered cruisers that emphasize ease of operation, the traditional cruiser appearance and a plush ride rather than performance. On the other are customs such as the Magna, which place a premium on horsepower and sport-oriented handling. Indications are, however, that in a showroom showdown the pure custom has the edge over the performance custom. And in the VF700C Magna's case, the functional dividing line between the two camps has become less distinct.

For '85, Honda wanted to make the Magna more appealing to pure-custom buyers, without sacrificing its sporting allure. And, because a low seat height is one of the prime ingredients in a serious, urban-bound custom, that's the route Honda took. To that end, Honda engineers redesigned the frame and eliminated the Magna's underseat auxiliary gas tank, which resulted in a fractionally lower seat height. In the process, they also lengthened the swingarm 1 inch, to help reduce the chassis jacking inherent with shaft-drive motorcycles. That longer swingarm also adds 1 inch to the wheelbase, but the steering head angle and trail are unchanged from last year's figures. As a result, the bike still steers with a light, precise feel at low speeds, and snapping the throttle open or closed produces little jacking effect.

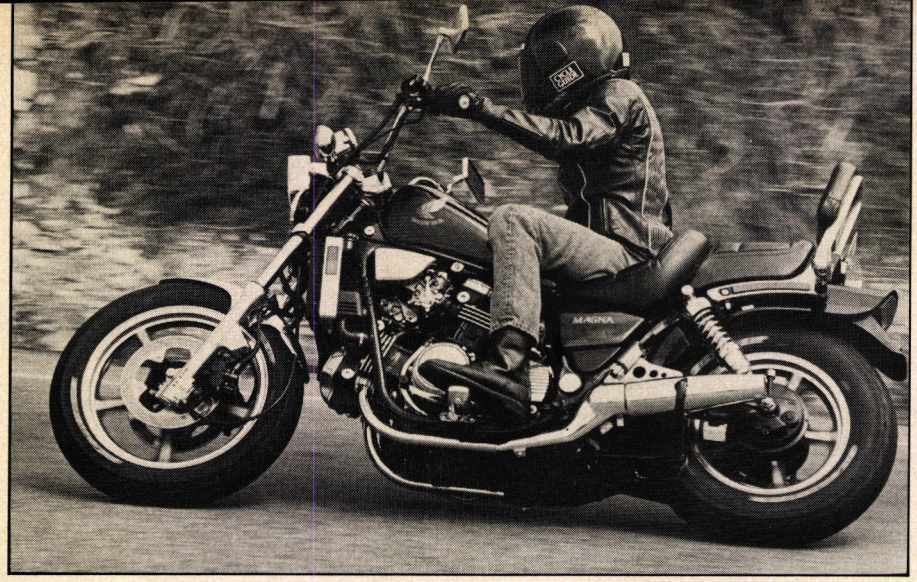
PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 TIBOR

There was one feature, though, of the original Magna that Honda wanted to retain for '85: its handling, which made it equally at home on the boulevard or the backroad, and placed it squarely in the performance-custom camp. But the same firm suspension that gave the Magna its canyon-carving ability made few concessions to the genteel pastime of cruising, where a compliant ride takes precedence over cornering clearance. So Honda lowered the spring rates front and rear for '85, which reduced cornering clearance slightly but softened the ride.

To complement the lower spring rates, Honda also reduced rebound damping front and rear, and shuffled the compression-damping rates. Compared to the settings on last year's Magna, compression damping has been raised in the shocks, and the fork received a higher compression-damping rate overall, with an increase in the right leg and a slight decrease in the left leg. The TRAC (Torque Reactive Anti-dive Control) damping rates, however, remain unchanged, though adjustment is now made via a knob, instead of a screwdriver as on previous models.

And Honda's suspension work paid off. On the freeway, the Magna delivers a ride that's in a class with heavyweight touring bikes. Around town, it glides over most surface irregularities, although severe bumps occasionally cause the fork and shocks to bottom heavily. That new-found compliance hasn't hurt the Magna's backroad prowess much, either. With the fork pressure at the recommended maximum (6 psi) and rear spring preload set at No.4 (of five), on smooth twisty roads the Magna holds its own against most cruisers, and just plain runs away from some. In corners the footpegs touch down first—and earlier than was the case with the '84 model—but even at peg-dragging lean angles the Magna is stable and sends reassuring messages to the rider through the handlebar, pegs and seat.

Equally reassuring is the powerful dual-disc front brake. The twin-piston calipers provide strong, fade-free stopping even after repeated hard use, and with the TRAC set to No.4 (of four), front-end dive during braking is slowed considerably. Together with the drum rear brake, which is 20mm larger than last year's, the Magna's discs do as much as the engine to fulfill the "performance" part of the performance-custom label, with the ability to handle downhill charges at a pace more suited to sportbikes than cruisers.



HONDA VF700C MAGNA

Importer: American Honda Motor Co. Inc.
100 W. Alondra Blvd.
Gardena, California 90247

Category	street
Suggested retail price	$3448
Engine type	liquid-cooled four-stroke 90 degree tandem vee-four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	70.0mm x 45.4mm
Displacement	698.9cc
Compression ratio	10.5:1
Carburetion	four 34mm Keihin constant-vacuum
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Showa air spring, 39mm stanchion tube diameter/ 5.5 in. (139mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	Showa, 5-position adjustable spring preload/ 3.9 in. (100mm)
Weight	520 lbs. (235.9kg)
Wheelbase	61.7 in. (1566mm)
Seat height	29.5 in. (749mm)
Steering head angle	30.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.15 in. (106mm)
Best ¼-mile acceleration	12.390 sec., 108.82 mph (175 kph)
Top speed (observed)	128 mph (206kph)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	131 ft. (39.9m)
Fuel consumption	34 to 47 mpg (14 to 20 km/l)
Warranty	12 months, unlimited mileage
Available colors	black, red

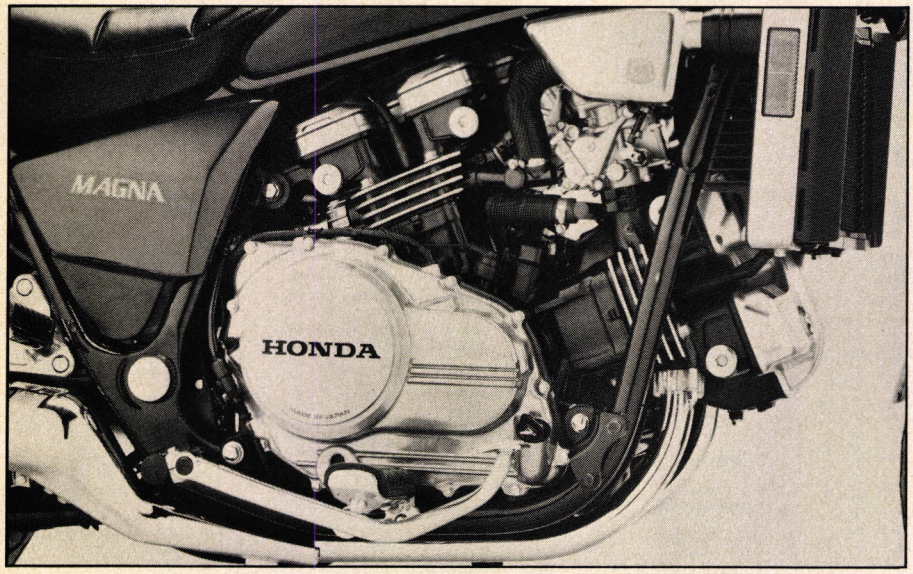
But don't be confused by the occasional sportbike signals the Magna sends out; its natural habitat is the boulevard. And in that environment, the attention given to rider comfort paid off as well as that given to the suspension. In addition to lowering the seat, Honda engineers changed the handlebar bend, and together with the well-padded saddle, the new bar makes the Magna an inviting perch for urban cruising, while still maintaining a laid-back profile. On the freeway, however, the rider quickly tires of hauling himself forward to fight the wind, and the boulevard-bred seating position soon becomes a misery.

That's a shame, too, because there's nothing about the engine's performance that precludes long freeway rides. Downsized in 1984 to sneak under the tariff on imported motorcycles larger than 750cc, the 699cc liquid-cooled vee-four provides immediate acceleration in any one of its six speeds, and nearly vibration-free running all the way to its 10,500-rpm redline. Twisting the throttle produces an unbroken stream of power through 6000 rpm, at which point the Magna lunges forward, accelerating hard enough to make you forget the 50cc lost to the tariff. In fact, the Magna's 12.390-second/108.82-mph quarter-mile performance places it only fractionally behind the VF700F Interceptor (12.323/106.50), and the cruiser's 128-mph top speed is 4 mph *faster* than Honda's 700-class sporter.

But the Magna isn't the peaky road rocket those numbers might lead you to believe. When the engine is cold, the four constant-vacuum Keihin carburetors allow the bike to be ridden away after only a few seconds of choke. The engine's low-end muscle and low-effort hydraulic clutch also make stoplight-to-stoplight launches easy, and very little driveline lash intrudes on stop-and-go maneuvering, or backroad blitzing.

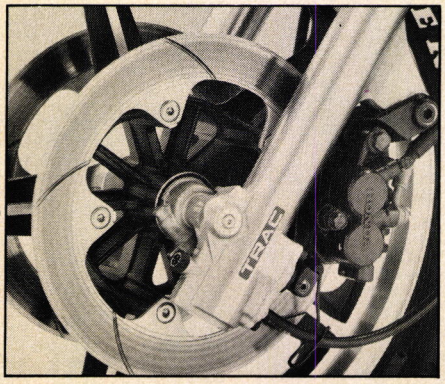
And in either venue, the Magna still fulfills the dual role required of performance customs, by combining a healthy measure of sporting ability with a plush ride and streetwise styling. Moreover, the VF700C goes its predecessor one better. The 700 has a better ride than before, it still handles as well as—and in some cases better than—anything in its class, and its engine packs a punch that delivers on its promise of performance. The '85 Magna, then, is proof that the blurring of the distinction between performance customs and pure customs isn't so bad. Indeed, if this bike is the result of moving closer to the pure custom camp, then it's a move any performance custom would do well to make.

—Jerry Smith



Liquid-cooled 699cc vee-four churns out power from idle to its 10,500-rpm redline

The Magna might have a cruiser's soul, but it's got a hot-rod heart.



Dual disc brakes with adjustable TRAC

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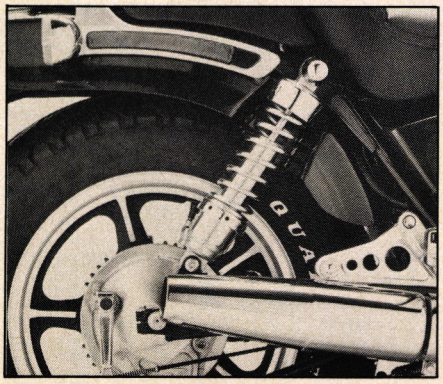

Improved shocks at the Magna's rear end

Mean fewer shocks at the rider's.

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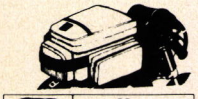

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OFF-ROAD

Monthly Proof that Man Does Not Live by Tarmac Alone

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Malcolm Smith Total Protection Knee and Shin Guards

An insurance policy for your legs.

• It doesn't matter how much protective gear a dirt racer wears; rocky roosts and the guy who just T-boned you in the first turn still will find a nice, fleshy, unprotected spot to hit. Legs are a prime target for hard knocks, too, and although boots and regular in-pant knee/shin guards do a fairly good job of repelling most moto-missiles, there still are chinks in a racer's leg armor.

Now, though, there's a solution to the rocks and pain in Turn One. Malcolm Smith Products offers its Total Protection Knee and Shin Guards, and they come close to providing just what their name implies. Each form-fitting hard-plastic protector works much like a regular in-pant knee/shin guard, but the MS units provide more coverage, wrapping almost halfway

around your leg and stretching from knee to ankle. Plus, their two-piece design offers a degree of adjustability you can't find in conventional knee/shin guards. With the MS guards, a tongue below the knee cup overlaps the shin piece; a flush-mounted bolt holds the two together, and a series of holes allows the guards to adjust to fit almost any leg. Further, the guards feature two different linings: a replaceable felt lining forms a comfortable, additional protective layer for your lower leg, and stretched nylon helps absorb the impact of straight shots to your knee.

With all their plastic and padding, then, you might think the MS guards would be too big to fit comfortably under motocross pants and boots, but that's hardly the case. The extra bulk around the ankle might make the fit a little tight, and certain bikes do cause some chafing between the guards and your ankles. But trimming the plastic can take care of the chafing, and from then on the guards become an almost unnoticed layer of armor.

What you *will* notice, though, is the added protection the MS guards provide. You won't be totally immune, because, as with coventional protectors, the plastic shells can't absorb the biggest bangs. Still, the increased area of coverage, especially around the ankles, is a real pain-saving advantage—especially when that guy T-bones you in Turn One. *—David Dewhurst*

Malcolm Smith Total Protection Knee and Shin Guards

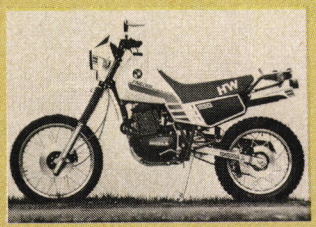
Manufacturer: Malcolm Smith Products, Dept CG, 7563 Indiana Ave., Riverside, California 92504

Suggested retail price: $29.95 a pair for the guards; $6.75 a pair for the replaceable felt liners

Sizes: Adult or youth

The look of performance

• The newest rage in European moto-fashion is the Paris-to-Dakar look. Everyone who's anyone is riding a beknobbed beast that looks capable of running 7000 miles through the desert without even breathing hard—even if they only ride on the street. The look is so in vogue, in fact, that even manufacturers that don't compete in the Paris-Dakar Rally have copied the big-tank appearance of a P-D bike. Even if such bikes have all the authenticity of a bogus Calvin Klein or Jordache designer label,



that's what's selling now. Take, for instance, this new Frigerio-Puch 350. With its dual discs, Rotax motor, long-travel Marzocchi front suspension and single-shock rear end, it might appear to have the stuff to tame the desert. But all that technology seems, oddly enough, like window dressing. After all, it's got the look—and that appears to be what counts.

—Larry Works

Le Touquet: Europe's desert race—without the desert

• Europe might not have any sizable deserts to speak of, but that couldn't keep European off-road racers from discovering American-style desert racing. Some 11 years ago, Continental riders learned that sand is the primary ingredient for a desert race, and took their off-road show to the beach; Le Touquet's beach, to be specific.

Le Touquet is a real crowd-pleaser, too. Annually, some 250,000 people flock to the west coast resort village in France to watch as 1200 riders race to glory on an 8-mile course through the countryside. And many of the spectators prefer to station themselves along the course's 3-mile-long beach straight, because that's where the action is. There, the riders are bumping into one another and falling, looking for all the world like colorful locusts swarming at top speed, and in basically the same direction. Usually, though, the top riders, such as former 500cc motocross World Champions Andre Malherbe and Hakan Carlqvist, and this year's Le Touquet winner Kees van der Ven, make it safely down that stretch of the

course. As for the privateers—and the bulk of the field consists of those weekend warriors—many fall one time or another during their three-hour ride.

Although the privateers' antics might sometimes seem a bit comical, the factory teams take Le Touquet seriously. And the reason why lies on the streets of Europe—there, you'll find hordes of riders on *dirtbikes,* replicas of the machinery that competes in Le Touquet and in the famed Paris-to-Dakar rally. It's the Euro-riders' passion for such motorcycles that make the factories send riders such as

PHOTOGRAPHY © PATRICK BEHAR

Malherbe, four-time Le Touquet winner van der Ven, and American Chuck Stearns (who rides for the Gauloises Yamaha team) to hit the beaches at Le Touquet. Because a victory on the beaches of France often means big sales on the showroom floors throughout Europe.

—Dain Gingerelli

When In Doubt, Punt

• It's no secret that the United States Football League is in financial trouble. With crowds that sometimes number only in the hundreds, talk naturally has focused on the infant league's very survival. By comparison, the AMA's Supercross series, which shares many of the same stadiums as USFL *and* other pro football and baseball teams, is in fine fettle, with large crowds to prove it.

And at the Orlando Supercross last April, it was obvious the motocrossers were far more popular than the Orlando Renegades, who play their home games in Orlando Stadium. After the national anthem was played to kickoff the Supercross, a stadium usher, used to the sparse football crowds, commented, "I'll tell you what—that football team would be jealous of this."

—Dain Gingerelli

Warren's Wins—And Losses

• Kawasaki rider Eddie Warren, on the other hand, would probably rather forget this year's Orlando Supercross. Prior to the Florida race, the Michigan-based rider had won three Pro-Am Supercrosses in a row, and when the gate dropped at Orlando, he looked ready to make it four-for-four. But his chances of a win vanished when a slower rider fell in front of him, and Warren lodged his KX125 in a haybale long enough for Larry Brooks to slip by on his Honda

© 1985 TOM RILES

CR125 for the win.

Warren's second-place finish wasn't his only misfortune at Orlando, though. While he was extracting his bike out of the haybale, someone was busy pulling the young rider's clothes, extra riding gear and wallet from his van. Considering Warren's two Orlando setbacks, then, you might say his 1985 Supercross record at that point was three wins, two losses.

—Dain Gingerelli

CROSS COUNTRY TEST:

Husqvarna 250WRX

A double-edged sword for dueling in the dirt.

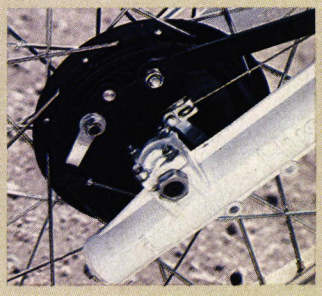
BY DAVID DEWHURST

• Husqvarna has always been deadly serious about racing in the dirt, and has double handfuls of off-road wins to prove it. Some say Husky has been *too* serious, though, accusing the Swedish firm of making no-compromise off-road motorcycles that win only in certain clearly defined arenas. So this year, Husky set out to change that attitude and to woo the critics into the fold. And the instrument of that change is a dual-purpose bike, the new 250WRX.

Don't make the mistake of lumping the WRX with other dual-purpose bikes, though; they don't have anything in common but their name. Instead, the 250WRX is a deadly serious dirtbike—like all Husqvarnas—with no concessions to street use. Moreover, Husky's vision of dual-purpose excellence meant combining the qualities necessary to win in tight woods and open desert. Consequently, as the designation implies, Husky derived its latest off-road weapon from two of the most successful dirt racers around: the WR enduro and XC cross-country models.

And for the WRX, Husky dipped into the parts bin and selected the 245cc liquid-cooled WR motor. With an emphasis on tractability rather than hair-trigger horsepower, the reed-valve WR engine has a heavy flywheel and mild porting that ensures you won't be caught out by an unexpected burst of power. The motor also has a wide-ratio six-speed gearbox with a stump-pulling first gear that's just right for threading between trees.

In contrast, the other half of this compromise machine comes from Husky's desert-ready XC, which donated its single-shock chassis, one renowned for its high-speed stability. For the most part, the XC chassis made the transition to WRX specs unaltered, but with a few exceptions. For instance, the WRX has an extended rear frame loop to support a long WR-style fender and its taillight. Husky also made use of the XC's rear suspension, with its box-section aluminum swingarm and Ohlins shock, which adjusts both for compression and rebound damping. The shock's stroke was shortened 3mm for use with the WRX, however, which translates into less suspension travel and a 0.5-inch lower seat height compared to the XC. The fork, on the other hand, is identical to that used in the XC/CR models.



With its XC heritage, then, you might expect the 250WRX chassis to feel right at home in the desert, and that's precisely the case. Indeed, the bike seems to steer even more slowly than an XC, which makes the WRX feel as steady as a Kenworth when you're plowing through deep sand or screaming along a fast fireroad. In fact, with the exception of Husky's XC, no other motorcycle inspires as much confidence as the WRX when you don't know what's beyond the next sandwash.

Part of the credit for the bike's rock-steady feel at speed goes to the rear suspension, which provides a compression- and rebound-damping setting to suit almost any rider. Even the shock's spring rate complements the bike's high-speed capabilities, although some riders might want to replace the stocker with an optional stiffer spring. The fork, however, doesn't rate the same superlatives; it has all the compliance of a frozen water bed. The major problem stems from excessive spring preload, and Husky factory riders are using an ATK spring kit (available from ATK Leitner Corp., Dept. CG, 2650-C Walnut Ave., Tustin, California 92680) to make the fix. Still, even with new springs, the leaky, friction-plagued Husky fork won't have the plush feel that late-

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

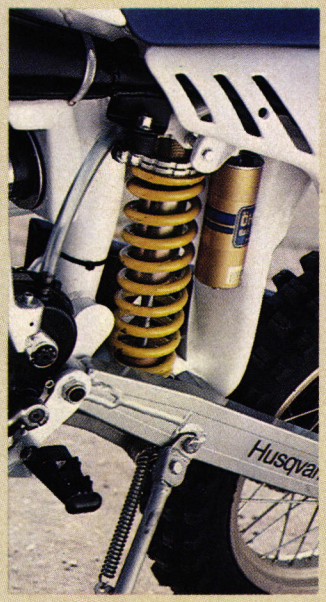
model Japanese forks provide.

Nor can the WRX compete with Japanese enduro bikes in terms of power. Despite it's mild tuning, the Husky's anemic engine has a suprisingly narrow powerband, and an annoying lack of low-speed torque. As a result, fast desert-riding means you have to stir the six-speed gearbox vigorously and fan the stiff-feeling clutch constantly. And even when you keep the motor on the boil, there's insufficient horsepower for serious high-speed desert work.

HUSQVARNA 250WRX

Importer: Husqvarna Motor Corp.
4935 Mercury St.
San Diego, California 92111

Category	enduro/desert
Suggested retail price	$3095
Engine type	liquid-cooled two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one main exhaust, two booster exhausts
Bore and stroke	69.5mm x 64.5mm
Displacement	244.7cc
Compression ratio (uncorrected)	15.0:1
Carburetion	one 38mm Mikuni slide/needle
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Husqvarna air-spring, 40mm stanchion tube diameter/11.8 in. (300mm)
Rear shock/wheel travel	Ohlins, 15-position compression damping, 15-position rebound damping, 30mm spring preload range/12.5 in. (317mm)
Weight	239 lbs. (108.4kg)
Wheelbase	59.4 to 60.5 in. (1508 to 1536mm)
Seat height	37.9 in. (963mm)
Steering head angle	27.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.72 in. (120mm)
Top speed (observed)	76 mph (122kph)
Warranty	30 days on engine and frame only
Available color	white only



The WRX's mild-mannered enduro motor does only a marginally better job in heavily wooded sections, too. Admittedly, its heavy flywheel and mild porting combine to get traction where other motors just produce wheelspin, but the Trelleborg tires compromise that virtue, because they don't work well on any surface harder than soupy mud. And on tight trails the motor still demands continual use of the transmission and clutch. But the biggest limitation to the WRX's woods performance is its slow-steering XC chassis. On fireroads, the WRX begs for a berm to help it change direction, and in the tight stuff it has all the agility of a Greyhound bus.

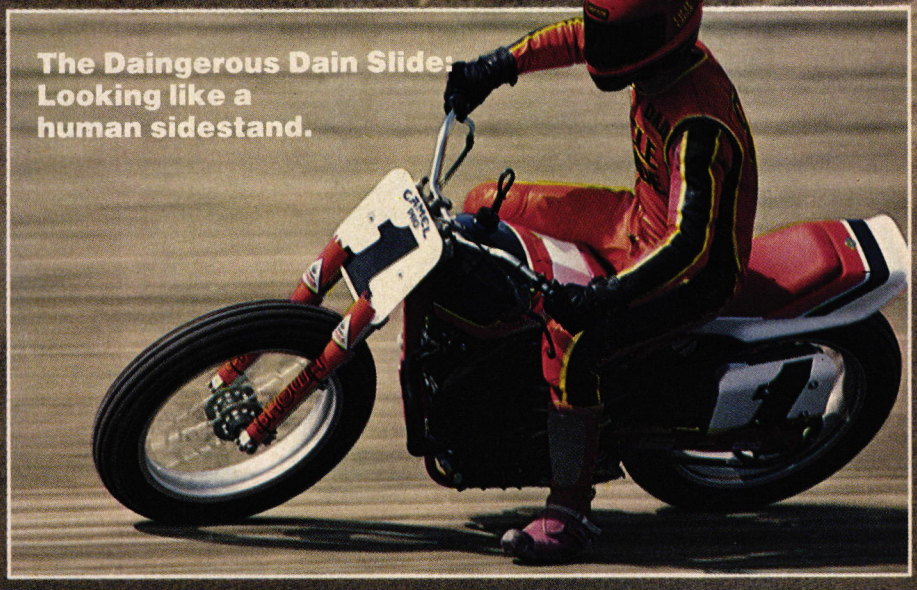
Both in the desert and in the woods, then, Husky's 250WRX simply doesn't measure up. And the reason stems directly from Husky's mix-and-match approach. Admittedly, the idea has merit: Combine the best parts from two bikes that are extremely capable yet completely different, to produce something that's competent both for woods and desert riding. That's not what happened, though. The 250WRX is no better than a WR in the desert, or an XC in the woods, and it's nowhere near as good as either of them in their own specialized environments. Ultimately, then, the 250WRX won't satisfy Husky's desire to broaden its market, or a rider's desire to broaden his off-road horizons. ●

RIDING IMPRESSION:

Honda RS750

Slide a mile on my shoe.

BY DAIN GINGERELLI



The Daingerous Dain Slide: Looking like a human sidestand.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

"OK," Romero said in a lively voice, "let's put Gingerelli on the bike now." Gene Romero, Honda's flattrack team coordinator, and factory rider Bubba Shobert had spent the last two days tire testing at San Jose. Their work was done, and they all could go home—but only after I rode the racebike.

Shobert grinned, his mechanic, Skip Eaken, chuckled, and behind me I heard David Dewhurst's Nikon click as he began recording on film my first-ever ride on a Miler. This was no ordinary Mile bike, though. It was the best of the breed, Ricky Graham's No. 1 machine. Graham himself, the defending AMA Grand National Champion, was sidelined with a broken left femur, an injury he received while trail riding.

Graham's mechanic, Sparky Edmonston, checked over the predatory-looking red-white-and-blue Honda one last time. Romero suggested I sit on the bike to see if the position of the handlebar and footpegs suited me. Edmonston cracked a smile and said, "Hell, he's never been on one of these things before; he can't tell the difference!"

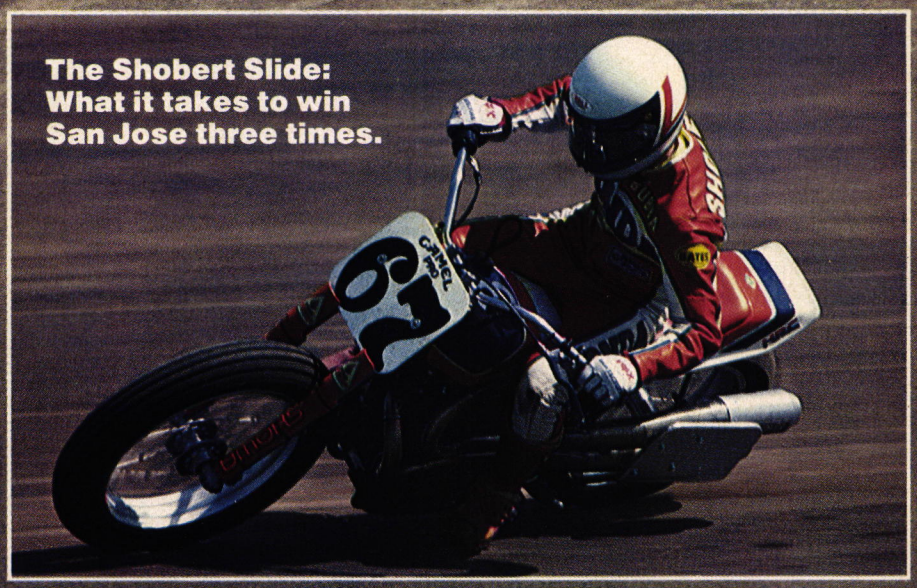
He was right. I *wouldn't* know what changes to make to the riding position. I would on a roadrace machine, or even a trailbike. But not a flattrack bike, a motorcycle designed only to go straight and turn left. Even so, I went through the motions. As I reached for the handgrips and swung aboard, my right leg smacked against the two protruding Mikuni carburetors, forcing my knee outward. My left foot dropped straight to the ground, missing the left footpeg entirely, because the peg was positioned about 6 inches farther to the rear than the right one. The pegs are staggered because the farther back the left peg is, the less chance it has of tangling with the rider's steel shoe during 100-mph slides.

I settled onto the hard saddle, shoulders hunched, right leg crooked like a dog's when leaving his mark on a fire hydrant, left leg back to the rear-mounted footpeg. "Feels fine to me," I lied. I knew I looked ludicrous, and my position drew Shobert to comment, "It's not as bad as

it feels." Honda's engine development specialist, Rob Muzzy, added, "Even if it is, fear takes over."

Fear. The word that everybody—including me—had avoided all afternoon. It was the word that had haunted me the past couple of weeks, ever since Romero and Honda had agreed to let me ride the Miler. I feared looking and riding like a twit on this factory racebike, and perhaps most of all, I feared falling off and damaging what amounted to a $100,000 motorcycle. Romero reassured me, saying, "Don't worry about going fast. If you go too fast and fall, we can fix the bike, no problem. But you have to fix your own bones."

I found little comfort in Romero's words. But my fear evaporated when Edmonston bump-started the bike, and its vee-twin motor rumbled to life. The raspy firing cadence gave me a burst of energy, and adrenaline raced through me. I swung into the saddle, snapped my faceshield shut, then pulled up on the shift lever. I tensed as I accelerated through first gear, awaiting a sudden surge of horsepower that would lift the front wheel. No such thing happened. The engine just pulled steadily until I sensed it was time to shift; the RS has no tachometer.



The Shobert Slide: What it takes to win San Jose three times.

I reached third gear by Turn One, then gently rolled off the throttle. And as though the Honda had been programmed, it swung its Carlisle rear tire out to the right. My steel shoe tapped the hard-pack clay, and I arced the RS into the blue groove that Shobert had etched in the turn during the past two days of testing. It was a narrow groove, no more than 18 inches wide. But taken in third—not fourth gear, as I would later—following Shobert's trail was easy. Too easy, it seemed.

Easy or not, one point became apparent as I leaned the RS over to slide through the turn: A Miler is designed to be ridden this way *only*. The riding position felt natural with the bike cocked sideways, and the carburetors no longer interfered with my right knee. As I accelerated through Turns One and Two, the 750 was perfectly manageable and easy to

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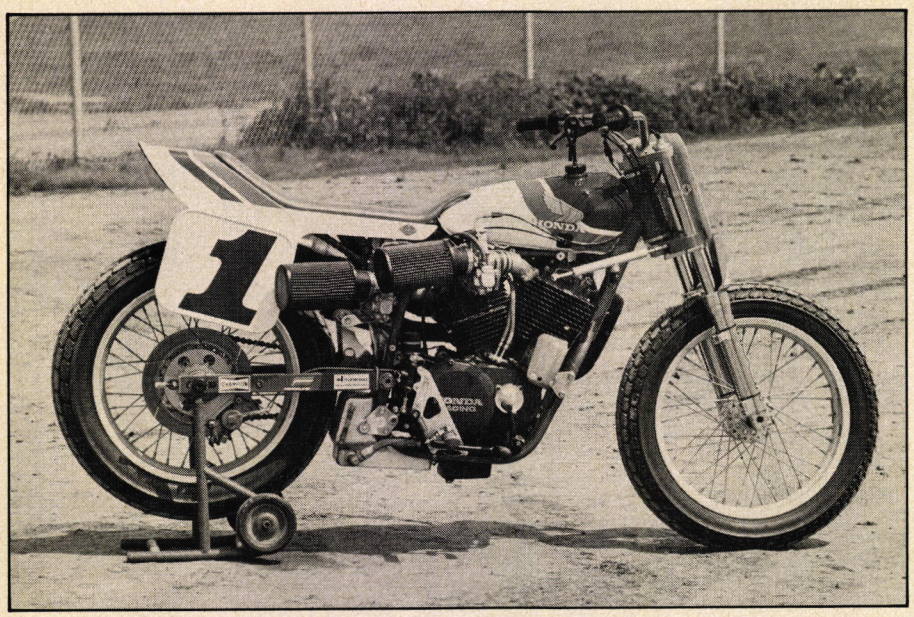


Ricky Graham's bike: hand-built for one purpose only, to win races

Designed in Japan for victory on American dirt.

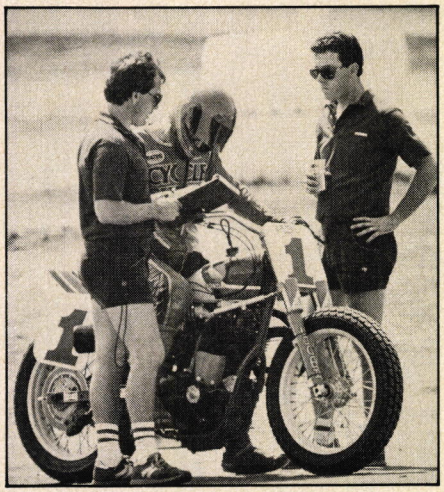
steer; I could control the slide just by twisting the throttle.

I shifted to fourth—top gear—on the back straight, and for the next nine laps I never had to shift again. Most of those laps were spent adjusting to the technique of dropping my left foot to the track, allowing the rear tire to break loose, then using throttle to maintain a slight drift through the corners. On my final lap, I shaved 4.5 seconds off my first lap, with a best of 44.74 seconds.

I pulled into the pits and Shobert and I talked about the track, and how he went through the turns. "It's not like road-racing," he said. "There's a lot more inconsistency to this." What really bothered me, though, was the obvious difference between Turns One and Two, and Three and Four. While One and Two are taken in one continuous arc, Three and Four are literally two separate turns. Shobert agreed. "Yeah," he said, "you go through that part of the track, and you have to almost square off the corner before exiting." My insight into San Jose's intricacies led me to believe I was earning my flattracker's stripes. Shobert burst my bubble, though, when he added, "Sometimes it feels like I could step off and push the bike faster through there." And I had been going as fast as I dared.

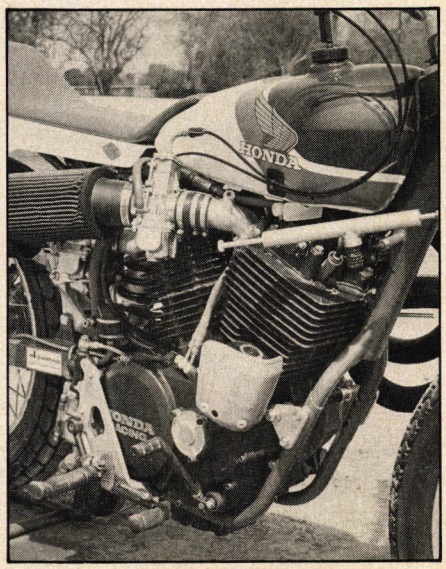
But there was still the second session to go through. Only this time, as I walked to the bike, I felt a little cockier. My stride felt more natural, too, even as the steel shoe clomped with each step. Edmonston obviously noticed my newfound confidence, and said, "Go get 'em, Champ."

And, sure enough, the bike *was* easier to ride. Shobert's chalk talk and my own critique had helped. I felt good, and ran the RS down the straights at wide-open throttle. So what if Edmonston had added two extra teeth to the rear sprocket, effectively limiting my top speed? I *was* at full throttle, and the radar clocked me at 109 mph entering Turn Three.



Romero and Edmonston discuss lap times

Gingerelli was 2 seconds off the pace.



Recipe for success: the RS750 engine

90 horsepower adds the spice.

Also during the second session, a tail wind developed along the front straight, giving me additional speed. I approached Turn One at full throttle, and rolled off later than normal. I went deeper than I had before into Turn One, behaving like a kid on Christmas day, learning new things about a toy Santa brought me. And one of the things I discovered was that if I went off the blue groove, the bike slid more easily, more crazily. So I began to lay down my own groove coming out of Turn Two—where the Honda crew couldn't see me—so I could fling the RS even *more* sideways. Not the best method for quick lap times, but it was more fun.

My fun ended going into Turn One on about the ninth lap. By now I was feeling bold entering that turn, keeping the throttle open a little longer than usual. But on lap nine, I went in too fast, drifting wildly off the blue groove, heading for the outside fence, and getting well and truly *sideways*. Both ends of the RS were sliding, and I leaned hard on the steel shoe, feathering the throttle for control. I figured I'd just bought myself a $100,000 motorcycle.

But I saved it—barely—and sheepishly got back on the groove, and stayed there. From that scary, sobering moment on, the San Jose track felt hostile and slippery, and my times slowed. My best for the day were two back-to-back 44.71s; about two seconds off the last qualifying rider's time for the San Jose Mile National, May 5, and nearly seven seconds slower than Shobert's pole-winning time.

When it was all over, Edmonston said, "You did OK." He grinned, and added, "You walked away with your health." Edmonston's words made me think; I *did* walk away from Graham's bike with all parts of my body working in prescribed order. But, still, I fell prey to Romero only a couple of weeks later at the San Jose Mile National when he asked, "Looking for a ride?" There was a bit of sarcasm in his voice, but I didn't hesitate to say yes. Indeed, I *was* looking for a ride. Only this time I'd like to make it a half-mile. Because, I'm told, that's where you can *really* get a flattracker sideways. ●

SPORT LINES

Cycle Guide's True Tales of Racecourses, Dark Horses and Machines at Speed

BY DAIN GINGERELLI

Mile High

There's no racing like Mile racing.

• The Mile; two words that might as well be in E.F. Hutton's vocabulary. Because when somebody talks about The Mile, you ought to listen, and for good reason. In no other arena of motorcycle competition do riders charge into corners at 120 mph, then pitch their bikes *sideways*. They don't do it in roadracing, they don't do it on half-miles, and they don't even do it on speedways. They only do it on The Mile.

For that reason—among others—The Mile has become the single most exciting form of flattrack racing in America, if not the world. As one expatriate English motojournalist put it after watching a recent AMA Mile race, "If for no other reason, I'm glad I moved to America because I got introduced to Mile racing."

Practically every Mile track—there are six venues on the AMA Camel Pro Series calendar for 1985—has its own personality and charisma, too. Syracuse is noted for close, elbow-to-elbow racing, and Springfield holds the title as the fastest Mile oval on the circuit, a distinction previously reserved for the Indianapolis Mile. San Jose, on the other hand, is known simply as *The Mile*, because it's understood that when the 17 riders strap on their steel shoes for San Jose's 25-mile Main event, they're in for one barn-burner of a race. That reputation owes in part to the track's surface and long straights, which make San Jose ideal for close racing. And even if a rider is lucky enough to break loose to an early lead, as Alex Jorgenson managed to do this year on his Honda, chances are he'll be reeled in by the rest of the pack; the long freight train of followers actually has an advantage, be-

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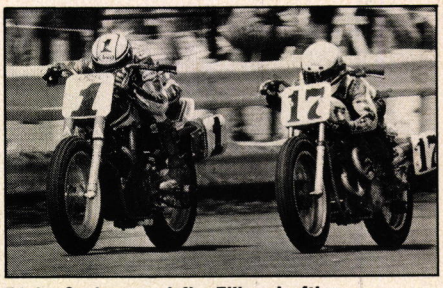
Gene Romero confers with Bubba Shobert

Strategy ends with the green flag.



Ricky Graham and Jim Filice drafting

Breaking wind together.

cause they can draft each other until they catch up with the lone rider at the front.

That's exactly what happened, too, by the eighth lap of the Honda San Jose Mile, May 5, when Jorgenson got sucked into the pack, and for the next 17 laps it was anybody's race. Jorgenson swapped positions with no fewer than seven other riders, including eventual race-winner Bubba Shobert, Scott Parker (second place), Hank Scott (third), Jim Filice, Jay Springsteen, Doug Chandler, and Tom Maitland. It was enough to sober up even the most inebriated spectator in the Dudley Perkins bleachers outside of Turn Four.

And among the crowd in San Jose's infield was Ron Wood, builder of dirttracking's Wood-Rotax machines. Mile racing is nothing new to Wood, and when San Jose got underway, you might have thought it was just another Camel Pro Series race as far as he was concerned. Yet the excitement of watching the front-runners toss the lead around as if it were a live grenade finally enveloped him, and he uttered, to no one in particular, "I love this kind of racing."

With such close-quarters racing, a little bumping and shoving is inevitable. For example, Hank Scott, with 12 Mile wins to his credit, said, "I've hit (other riders') exhaust pipes, tires, when passing." Some of the

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Bubba Shobert (67), Scott Parker (11) and Hank Scott (14) at San Jose

It was the last turn of the last lap; you call the winner.

passes leave their marks, too. "I've bent some parts during a pass," he added. Even so, most of the riders like the kind of racing that Mile tracks offer. Bubba Shobert, who has Grand National wins both on roadrace and Mile tracks, said, "Roadracing's different. You're racing the track more than you are other riders. In Mile racing, you're going against the other guy."

That quality—the fierce, man-to-man struggle—helps make Mile racing popular with spectators, too. Moreover, although the speeds compare to those in roadracing, and the riders slide and bump into one another as they do on a half-mile, the real excitement lies in the combination of those elements, and the closeness of the racing. The effect is akin to that of a 100-mph barroom brawl on wheels. The head-knocking pace never lets up, either—not until the checkered flag comes out after 25 of the toughest, closest miles in all of racing. That's what makes The Mile an undeniably thrilling spectacle. And that's why there's nothing like The Mile.

The Greatest Mile Ever Told

• Although Jay Springsteen and Hank Scott have won 12 Miles apiece—more than any other AMA racer—there's *nobody* faster than Ricky Graham on The Mile. Even Bubba Shobert has paid tribute to Graham, saying, "He's the fastest in the turns; he's smooth and doesn't scrub off much speed."

Apart from the recognition of his peers, though, Graham earned his reputation as *the* fastest racer on the Mile with his record-setting lap at Springfield, Illinois, last year. The Springfield track is the fastest of the Mile courses, with relatively short straightaways and long, slightly banked turns that allow a rider to keep his speed up all the way around. Graham made the most of Springfield's opportunities, too, forcing his Honda RS750 around the track at a blazing 104.203-mph average speed; it took him exactly 34.548 seconds to accomplish that feat. And he went even quicker—but, unfortunately, not for the official clocks. "I clocked him at about 107 mph," said Graham's tuner, Sparky Edmonston.

And when Edmonston talks about Graham's official record lap, he sounds as proud as a little league father whose son just pitched a no-hitter against the all-stars. "He didn't shut off once, and he went the whole way with his feet on the pegs," Edmonston said. "It was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen." Beyond its beauty, though, Graham's lap was, as the record book shows, the fastest Mile lap turned in by a racer—ever. And that makes him one of racing's greats.

—Dain Gingerelli

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FLATTRACKING:

XR750—Harley's Hot New Hand?

Gambling for high stakes on American dirt.

• When Honda dumped its NS750 pushrod vee-twin and dealt itself an all-new hand with the overhead-cam RS750, no one could doubt that Honda was serious about beating Harley-Davidson in American dirt-tracking. Unlike the ill-fated NS750— basically a hogged-out CX500 engine turned sideways—the RS had been designed from the first cut of the cards to do one thing: win the AMA Grand National Championship.

And halfway through the 1984 Camel Pro Series, Honda factory riders Ricky Graham and Bubba Shobert had already served notice that they intended to do just that; flattrack racing would no longer be Harley's private turf. In the end, Honda's high-tech RS750 vee-twin, with overhead camshafts and four valves per cylinder, steamrollered the dated pushrod-operated two-valvers flat, and won the championship. When it did, the shock waves spread throughout racing, shaking the brick walls of the H-D factory in Milwaukee. Honda had upped the ante, and forced Harley into an expensive decision: fold, or toss in more chips.

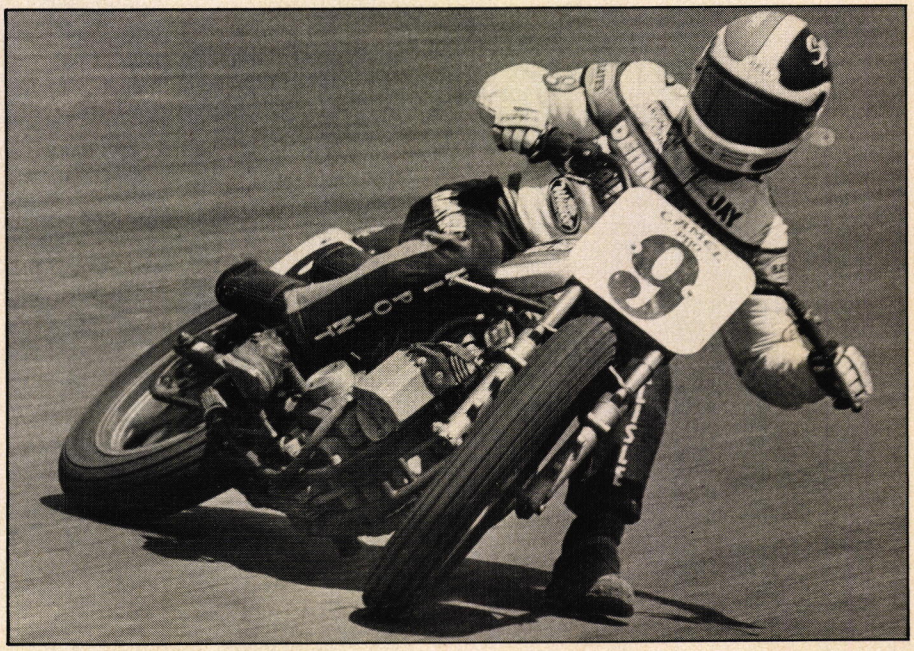
From behind its poker-face, Harley elected to stay in the game—but with reservations. As team manager, Clyde Denzer, said, "We're going to do a lot of R&D on the existing engine, which will have to carry us through the 1985 season." The success or failure of the XR750 this season ultimately will determine whether Harley builds a new engine for 1986.

For now, though, Harley's game plan is simple: rev the XR750 engine a little higher to get more horsepower. But higher rpm can spell big trouble, especially when you're tweaking an aging design that started life as a low-revving torque motor. As Denzer put it, "Remember, we're starting with an engine that was designed in 1972." And that original vee-twin, as he said, "put out less horsepower," adding, "We're going to have some mechanical failures (at high rpm)."

But Harley is willing to gamble. Yet, just to hedge its bets, the race team will work closely—closer than ever, in fact—with members of the engineering department. "Their analytical group will be assisting us with this development program," Denzer said, "and hopefully be able to stay a step ahead of them (mechanical failures)."

Still, the big question remains whether Harley's born-again XR750 will, without major design changes, have enough muscle to go head-to-head with Honda's RS750. Harley's hole card certainly is its long and intimate association with the unique demands of flattracking. And when the cards are laid on the table at season's end, we'll know whether Harley's draw to an inside straight was enough to beat Honda's high-tech hand.

—Jerry Smith



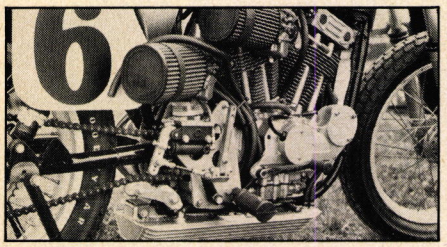
Harley-Davidson's trump card might be Jay Springsteen

Will he be enough to beat Honda's high-tech hand?

FLATTRACKING:

Harley's XR750 Vee-twins

The mainstay of American flattracking.



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Factory XR uses a larger oil sump

Another way to keep the XR cool.

• Since Harley-Davidson introduced its alloy XR750 engine in 1972, that vee-twin powerplant has been the most potent weapon in the privateer's arsenal for dismantling American dirttracks. More Camel Pro Series races—and championships—have been won on board Harley XR750s than on any other motorcycle. So it's no wonder that when you look around the pits at nearly any CPS dirttrack event, you'll see lots of XRs.

Given the XR's popularity—and the fact that it's been around for 14 years—you'd think there'd be one of those rumbling vee-twins for every racer who ever dreamed of drafting Jay Springsteen down the back straight at Syracuse or San Jose. That's just not the case, though. According to Harley-Davidson's team manager, Clyde Denzer, only about 470 XR750s have been built, a figure born from four limited production runs, in 1972, 1974, 1978, and 1980. And in the last two runs, Harley only built XR *motors,* because most racers didn't seem to care for the chassis, instead assembling their racebike with aftermarket parts. Indeed, H-D built the last complete XR750—frame and engine—in 1974.

Demand for XR motors has always been high, though; high enough now, in fact, that Harley-Davidson plans to make a fifth production run. "We'll be putting together 25 to 50 more this year," Denzer said. But don't expect many changes in the new motors. All the XR parts needed to build the new powerplants have been sitting on the warehouse shelves for more than a year now. And they are basically the same as those used in every XR750 engine ever built. Yet one thing is for certain: Harley's roaring XR powerplants will always be remembered as the heart—and maybe even the very soul—of American dirttracking.

—Jerry Smith

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Pit Bits

Bubba Shobert after a Mile win

At last, he's in the lead.

• Shobert's Show: When Bubba Shobert won the Stroh's Sacramento Mile, April 13, he took the Camel Pro Series point lead in the bargain. Interestingly enough, that's the first time in Shobert's career that he's led the Camel Pro Series points standings.

• Springsteen shorts Shobert: Shobert's win streak—which included the Ascot TT and the Sacramento Mile—ended at the San Jose Shorttrack, when Jay Springsteen won the Saturday night race. Shobert wasted little time in getting back on top, though, and he won the San Jose Mile the the following day. Afterwards, he was asked how he felt about back-to-back races in two days. "I like it," he said. "I don't have to wait long for my revenge that way."

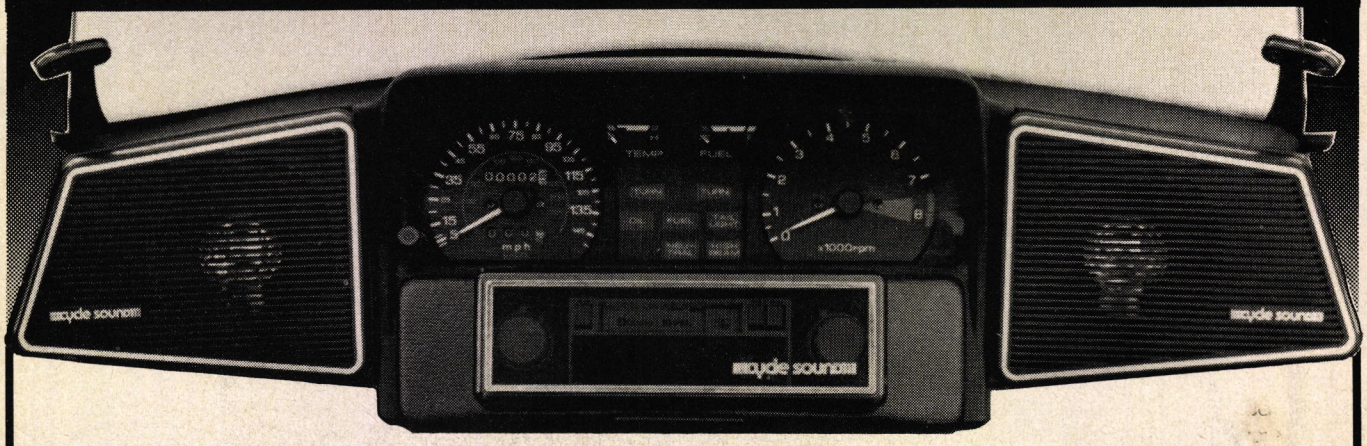
• Follow the leader: AMA flattracking used to be considered Harley country, but not anymore. At the San Jose Mile, more than half the field for the Main *wasn't* riding Harley-Davidson XR750s; nine of the 17 starters were on Honda RS750s.

• What will you do with all the money you save? Toyota, a major sponsor of all AMA Supercross races this year, found itself in an uncomfortable situation at the Superbowl of Motocross at the Los Angeles Coliseum, May 11. Evidently, Nissan had the exclusive rights to automobile advertising at the Coliseum, and, consequently, Toyota couldn't display its banners at its own race. Even so, Toyota's promotional department was driven, enough to continue paying $100 to all the riders who got the holeshots in the 12 heats.

• Spencer's double double: Honda's Freddie Spencer scored a pair of double victories at the Italian and Austrian GPs, winning both the 250 and 500 races at each event. After the Austrian GP, Spencer took the lead in both classes, with 59 points to Honda's Anton Mang's 50 in the 250s, and 69 points to Eddie Lawson's 59 in the 500s.

• Quote Department: In a *Los Angeles Times* interview with Kenny Roberts prior to the Long Beach Toyota Pro-Celebrity Race, the former three-time world champion discussed the finer points about going fast on two wheels. "The way you ride 'em when you get to my level, you literally stop your heart beating every time," Roberts said. "I'd like to know exactly how fast it speeds your heart up. When you have three or four of those a day it gets old after a while. You say, 'Man, I don't really need this.' "

Seeing Is Believing



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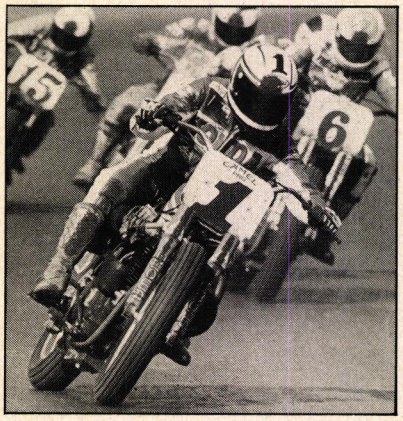

Ricky Graham staying out of trouble

Yet finishing eighth at San Jose.

• Ricky Graham shouldn't have been racing at the San Jose Mile last May. He'd broken his left femur only seven weeks before, and had a 12-inch-long stainless steel rod holding the bone together. He should have been watching, not *racing.*

But that's not the way Graham earned his No. 1 plate; he did it on the track. And that's how he ended up riding his Honda RS750 out for the first practice session at San Jose, gingerly testing his still-mending leg while sliding into corners at 120 mph. His times showed he was still in top form, too. And that, Graham said, was what counted.

Graham's decision to race at San Jose came just three weeks before, when he watched his teammate, Bubba Shobert, win the Sacramento Mile. "After I went to Sacramento, I hated not riding," Graham said. A check-out ride a few days before San Jose at the Ascot speedway track near Honda headquarters in Gardena, California, confirmed Graham's belief that he could race.

Just being competitive wouldn't be enough to get him back on the track, though; there was another injury to consider. "I also had to get a medical release for my crash at Houston," he said. He was certain his own doctor—who was treating him for his broken leg—

Continued

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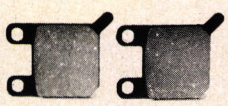

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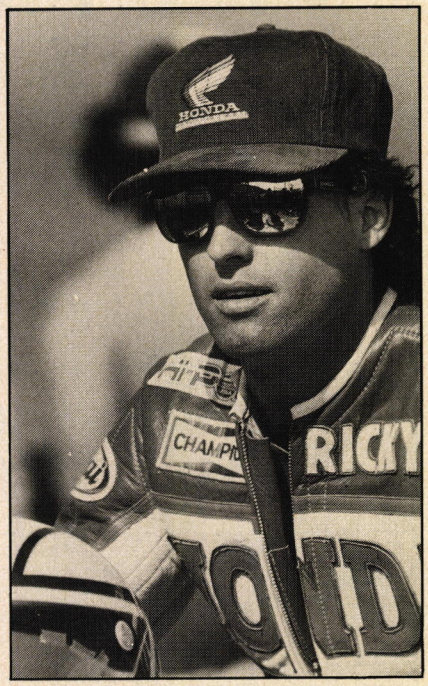
Winners & Losers

wouldn't allow him to race, so he went to *another* doctor for the rib injury he got in Houston. (The AMA requires medical releases for AMA race-related injuries only; the broken femur happened while Graham was trail riding, and as far as the AMA was concerned, didn't exist.) "I tried to walk straight and he (the doctor) didn't notice (the leg injury)," Graham said. The doctor gave his medical approval, declaring that the Champ was fit, so to speak, to race.

Graham's first doctor almost found out about the clandestine arrangement, though. "There was a story about me racing San Jose in the local paper on Friday," he said, "and when I saw that, I said, 'Oh, no, my doctor's going to find out and be mad.' "

But the phone never rang, the doctor never showed up to object, and Graham managed to make it through practice at San Jose. Still, the effort took its toll—in pain. After one practice session, he rolled into the pits where Kenny Roberts and several other people were standing. Graham took off his helmet, and Roberts asked, "Does it still hurt?"



Graham behind shades, incognito

Is there a doctor in the house?

Graham shrugged and said, "Yeah. But so what?" Astonishingly, he went back out and qualified third fastest.

Later, Graham placed third in Heat Three, earning a spot in the Main. But even with that near-miraculous finish, he still was concerned about his leg. "I knew if I fell," he said afterwards, "I'd really hurt." So he went to the starting line for the Main, more than a little apprehensive about mixing it up with 16 other riders for 25 laps. "I saw Bubba almost low-side one lap, and (Scott) Pearson almost high-sided, so I figured I'd just cool it and stay away from everybody."

Right; ride a conservative race, belt, suspenders and all. "I guarantee," Graham said, "I *was* careful." Just the same, he finished eighth overall—a heroic effort, to say the least, the kind that separates champions from the also-rans. And he was careful—careful enough not to get hurt again, and careful enough not to get caught. But he was audacious enough to earn seven valuable Camel Pro Series points, and keep alive his bid to win a second CPS championship. ●

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LETTERS

Balled-up terms, Superbike fever and 55 furor

ON THE BALL

Walt Trygstad (June 1985 Letters) had the "out" aspect of the balls issue well in hand but is misinforming you on the other.

"Balls to the wall" is an expression coined by early air racers to describe the position of the throttle and mixture controls when running WFO. The push-pull controls had knobs on the pilot's end. As both were often mounted on or near the gauge panel, it's clear how the phrase arose: Both knobs (balls) shoved all the way "to the wall."

Bob Millett
Holliston, Massachusetts

Fine, but what's this "well in hand" business?—ed.

STRICTLY ASININE

The "Risky Business" letter is bull! I think it is completely asinine that anyone would actually think it a good idea to have displacements restricted. Not to mention, nine times out of 10, the leather and boots are protection for the rider, not just for looking tough.

Tom Posz
Indianapolis, Indiana

Billy Idol's the exception, right?—ed.

THE ANSWER IS....

After reading your June 1985 issue cover to cover (my heart is still lusting after that FZ750 Superbike), a couple of questions come to mind.

Since you're based in California and most motorcycle makers now must produce a California-only model, which model do you use for a road test—the California-only model or the one produced for the rest of the states?

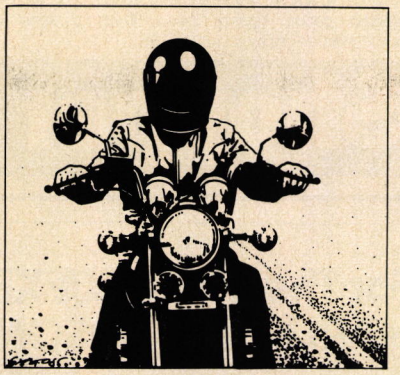
Also, the FZ Superbike photos on pages 54 and 56 show a flash of yellow on the front rim. What is that mark?

Richard C. Dagey
Lexington Park, Maryland

We've gotten both kinds of test models; the performance difference between the two is neglible. And the yellow flash could be California sun, but it's probably duct tape holding on the wheel weights—ed.

PRIMITIVE PARTISANS

Congratulations on your statesmanship in publishing the 55 Club letter in your May 1985 issue. That antediluvian group of 3245 members is lobbying to outlaw motorcycles in excess of 500cc displacement, and puts safety clothing such as leathers and boots in the same category as tattoos.



The bottom line is that irrational prejudices of all sorts are still alive and well in this country. If the AMA is wise, it will use letters like the 55 Club's to make non-members like me realize what a long way we have to go to make motorcycling fully acceptable, even in today's liberated society. I hope we succeed in my 16-year-old daughter's lifetime.

Bernard V. Parrette
Washington, D.C.

COMMON BOND

I don't care what bureaucratic wimps such as the 55 Club think of motorcyclists' image. The speed limit is oppressive; one can go over it and still not take unreasonable chances. The freedom of motorcycling is something only a rider can understand. We should stick together against such soft-spined non-riders.

Troy Avent
Torrance, California

DRIVEN TO WRITE

The letter from this 55 Club got me upset—I hope it got a *lot* of folks upset. Who the hell are these people? This must be a prank. If there is in fact a 55 Club, it's no wonder we riders have such a hard time. I've heard of oatmeal heads, but give me a break.

Chuck Castell
Lafayette, Indiana

Is that before or after the oats have been through the horse?—ed.

All letters must include the writer's name and address. Letters will be edited for length. Due to the volume of mail received, we regret we are unable to give personal responses. ●

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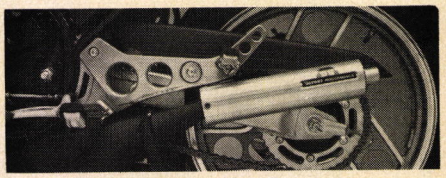

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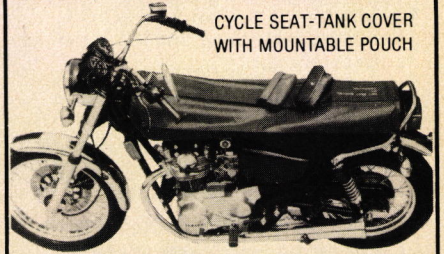

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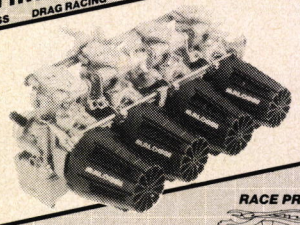

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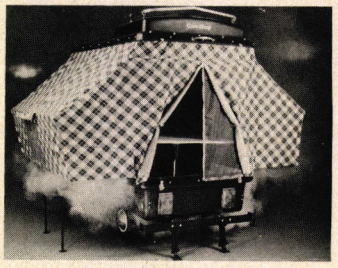

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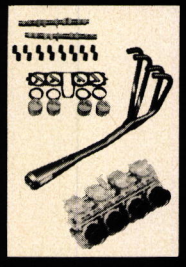

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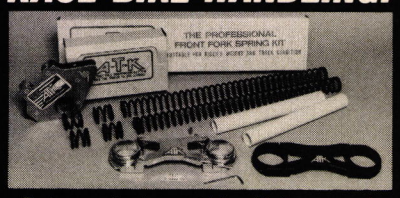

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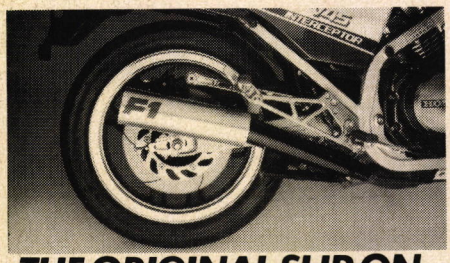

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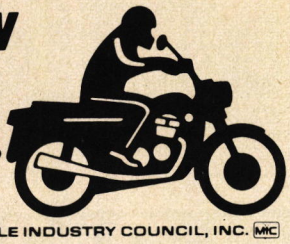

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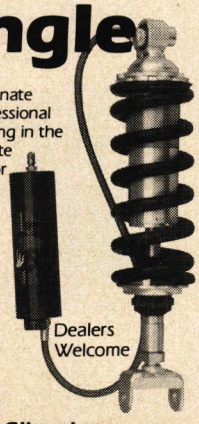

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